







FIFTY YEARS  
OF PARLIAMENT





*Photo: Haines.*

SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNFRMAN

*Fifty Years of Parliament*  
*by*  
*The Earl of Oxford and Asquith*  
*K.G*

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*PART III*





# FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

## CHAPTER I

### LIBERAL DISCORDS :

THE BALFOUR EIRENICON, 1901-1902

THE Election of 1900 was followed by a reconstitution of the Cabinet. Lord Salisbury gave up the Foreign Office to Lord Lansdowne, who was succeeded at the War Office by Mr. Brödrick ; and Mr. Goschen took a peerage and resigned the Admiralty to Lord Selborne. There was no political significance in these changes. As Campbell-Bannerman said in a speech in Dundee : " The stable remains the same ; the horses are the same ; but every horse is in a new stall." There was one notable exception : Mr. Chamberlain remained in his old stall at the Colonial Office. In the same speech, turning to his own establishment, with its rather motley and unruly stud, Sir Henry added : " The door has always been open for Lord Rosebery's return. We should welcome him and rejoice to see him standing among his old comrades, and taking his share in carrying on, as he so well can, the work which they have been endeavouring to prosecute in the most unfavourable circumstances during his absence."

Nothing in the end came of this invitation ; for though Lord Rosebery continued to make sporadic

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incursions into the field of controversy, not always in support of those who were called "Liberal Imperialists," he was for the most part content (in his own phrase) to "plough his furrow alone," and never rejoined the Councils of the Liberal Party; in which it is clear that at this time Campbell-Bannerman would readily have yielded him the first place.

The South African War dragged on for eighteen months after it had been officially declared to be over; and in its later stages there was much controversy in Parliament over farm-burning, concentration camps, and other phases of guerrilla campaigning. An unfortunate phrase of Campbell-Bannerman's, used at a Liberal dinner—"methods of barbarism"—unfortunate, because it was so easily twisted into meanings which (as he often explained, but always in vain) it was not intended by him to convey—became a catchword which inflamed and embittered the disputants. Amongst other consequences, it helped to afford the occasion for a series of dinners and counter-dinners, organized by the combatant sections of the Liberal Party, who became (not very profitably) engaged in what Henry Lucy wittily described as a "war to the knife—and fork." The various phases of this domestic conflict are impartially and graphically depicted by Mr. Spender,<sup>1</sup> and have now nothing more than a faint and fading interest.

I will only venture to quote a single passage from one of the many speeches which I contributed to the common stock, because it gives a fairly succinct expression to the views of those who went by the name of "Liberal Imperialists."

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Campbell-Bannerman."

## LIBERAL DISCORDS

“ Empire, to Liberals, does not mean a syndicate for the exploration and exploitation of the races of the world. It does not mean a mere commercial partnership, founded on the basis of profit and loss. It does not mean simply a mutual insurance society for the protection of its members against external attack. Its significance and its value to us are this—that with all its failures and shortcomings, with all its weak places and its black spots, it is the greatest and the most fruitful experiment that the world has yet seen in the corporate union of free and self-governing communities.”

Such a conception of Empire would be found, I added, not to paralyse, but to stimulate all those aspirations and efforts which Liberals included under the general name of social reform. It was the work of statesmanship in this country to make the Empire worth living in as well as worth dying for.

“ If the Liberal Party is to succeed, it must appeal to sober-minded and level-headed men in all strata of humanity and in all quarters of the King’s Dominions. It must first convince the people that it is a national party to which they can safely entrust the fortunes of the Empire ; and next, and not less important, that it is the Liberal Party, distinguished in tradition, in principle, in spirit, from those to whom it is opposed, which neither fears nor favours classes or interests ; the party which strives everywhere and at all times to enrich the national character and intelligence, to widen the range of opportunity, and to raise the standard of life.”

More attention is deserved by Lord Rosebery’s speech at Chesterfield—December 16, 1901—if only because it was (and perhaps remains) the *locus classicus* for phrases which passed quickly into the political

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currency of the time: the "neutral inn," the "clean slate," and "efficiency." All of them became texts for much controversial exegesis. C.-B., for instance, himself asked whether the "*clean slate*" involved as its "inevitable accompaniment" the practice and penance of the "*white sheet*"? He added that he was not himself prepared to "erase from the tablets of his creed" any principle or aspiration of Liberalism. To which Lord Rosebery (who had already, in a private interview with him, declared "I am not, in ecclesiastical phrase, in communion with you")<sup>1</sup> rejoined in a letter to *The Times*:<sup>2</sup> "I remain outside the tabernacle, but not, I think, in solitude."

No wonder that a shrewd onlooker (Lord Tweedmouth) remarked that some of the Liberal leaders were suffering from a too profuse use of metaphor.

The death of Queen Victoria (January, 1901) removed a great historic figure, who never ceased up to the end of her reign to take an active and vigilant part in the work of government, and the last year of whose life was clouded by the anxieties and vicissitudes of the War. The War did not, in fact, come to an end until it had lasted two and a half years. On May 31, 1902, the terms of peace, which had been negotiated by the Boer leaders with Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner at Vereeniging, were signed at Pretoria. A month later, under the stress of increasing physical disability, Lord Salisbury resigned, and the King sent for Mr. Balfour to take his place. His first act (according to Mr. George Wyndham)<sup>3</sup> was "to secure Chamberlain and Devonshire, and to try and secure Beach." The two first-named agreed to serve

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Ripon," II, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> February 21, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> "Life and Letters of George Wyndham," p. 447.

## LIBERAL DISCORDS

under him, the Duke undertaking the leadership of the Unionist Peers. Sir Michael Hicks Beach retired from the Exchequer, and for the next three years sat on a back bench in the House of Commons. A year later (June 9, 1903) he informed the House that if his protests against the growth of expenditure had received more sympathy from his colleagues he might not then have been addressing it as a private member. Lord James of Hereford also retired from the Cabinet, to which Mr. Austen Chamberlain was for the first time admitted.

An Education Bill to substitute the County Councils for School Boards and to place the denominational schools on the rates, and the imposition of a one-shilling import duty on corn and flour (in Sir M. Hicks Beach's last Budget), were the principal legislative achievements of the Session of 1902. Between them they produced the effect of a political miracle; that of reuniting in opinion and in policy the Liberal Party. As early as May 23 Lord Rosebery, in a speech at the National Liberal Club, took occasion to declare that "the Liberal Opposition in Parliament never stood so well for unity." Later on in the session Campbell-Bannerman and I attended together the birthday dinner of the Eighty Club, and I gave expression to the universal feeling when I said that "rarely in the history of parties had any Government at the same time challenged the favour of destiny, and fired the zeal of its opponents, by producing in one session two such measures as the Education Bill and the Corn Tax."

Mr. Chamberlain did not conceal from his Liberal Unionist colleagues his profound dislike of the Education Bill. To the Duke of Devonshire he wrote (September 22nd): "I told you that your Education

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Bill would destroy your own party. It has done so. Our best friends are leaving us by scores and hundreds, and they will not come back.”<sup>1</sup>

This was probably true ; but the secession was not so formidable as that which he himself was destined to initiate in the following year.

<sup>1</sup> “ Life of Devonshire,” II, p. 284.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FISCAL CONTROVERSY : FIRST STAGE

■

WHILE the Debates on the Education Bill were still dragging on, Mr. Chamberlain left England (November, 1902) on a visit to South Africa. The object of his mission was to bring about "racial and political peace," and, incidentally, to arrange (if possible) for a contribution of thirty millions from the Outlanders towards the cost of the War. His opponents joined with his followers in wishing him God-speed. Before leaving he pressed on his colleagues that the Corn Duty imposed by Hicks Beach should be utilized as a starting-point and leverage for the introduction of a system of Imperial Preference. Mr. Ritchie, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, at once entered a written protest against continuing the tax for any such purpose. What the real attitude of the Cabinet at this moment was, it is difficult to gather from the confused and conflicting memories, months afterwards, of some of its members.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Chamberlain, it is plain, departed under the impression that the majority were with him; but an actual decision was held over till the time for settling the Budget of the next year (1903).

When the details of the Budget came up for Cabinet discussion in the following April, Mr. Chamberlain, who had just returned, found to his surprise that the Chancellor's proposals included the abolition

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Devonshire," II, pp. 298-9.



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of the Corn Duty. He again demanded its retention as an instalment of Colonial Preference, but allowed himself to be for the moment overruled. He has left on record his reasons for acting as he did: "The majority of my colleagues agreed with me. The difficulty of carrying out my policy arose from the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was opposed to it, and that there was no time to fight the question out then and there before the Budget had to be introduced. Accordingly the Cabinet, while allowing Mr. Ritchie to have his way with the Budget, decided to use the summer in further investigations of the questions which had been raised. No decision adverse to them [*sic*] was taken, and there was no occasion for me to resign."<sup>1</sup>

The Budget was accordingly introduced (April 23, 1903) in the form proposed by Mr. Ritchie, who defended the removal of the Corn Duty—a tax both on food and on raw material—in a full-blooded Free Trade argument.

A fortnight later, on May 15, in advance of the "further investigations" by the Cabinet, Mr. Chamberlain, in a speech at Birmingham, launched his new policy on the ocean of public controversy. It became from that moment until the General Election of 1906, despite the competing claims of such highly polemical topics as Education, Licensing and Chinese Labour, the paramount and dominating issue in British politics.

Mr. Chamberlain's famous discourse, described some months afterwards by Mr. Balfour as a "great speech by a great man," was a highly characteristic utterance. He confessed that, after roaming over South Africa, his "party weapons had become a

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Devonshire," II, p. 300.

## FISCAL CONTROVERSY : FIRST STAGE

little rusty," and he was in no mood to "excite" himself (like the stay-at-home politicians) about "the Education Bill, Temperance Reform, Local Finance"; "the calm which is induced by the solitude of the illimitable Veld may have affected my constitution." No more for him of the *arbusta humilesque myricae*. *Majora Canamus*.<sup>1</sup>

He then proceeded to sound, with no uncertain voice, the first notes of the new strain: Preferential Duties for the Colonies; Retaliatory Duties against foreign countries. The following passage gives the gist of the new policy: "I say it is a new position. I say the people of this Empire have got to consider it. I do not want to hasten their decision. They have two alternatives before them. They may maintain, if they like, in all its severity the interpretation, in my mind an entirely artificial and wrong interpretation, which has been placed upon the doctrines of Free Trade by a small remnant of Little Englanders of the Manchester School who now profess to be the sole repositories of the doctrines of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright. They may maintain that policy in all its severity, although it is repudiated by every other nation and by all your own Colonies. In that case they will be absolutely precluded either from giving any kind of preference or favour to any of their Colonies, or even protecting their Colonies when they offer to favour us. That is the first alternative.

"The second alternative is that we should insist that we will not be bound by any purely technical definition of Free Trade, that, while we seek as our chief object free interchange of trade and commerce

<sup>1</sup> In the same vein he seems to have said to the Liberal Whip: "You can burn your leaflets; we are going to talk about something else."

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between ourselves and all the nations of the world, we will nevertheless recover our freedom, resume the power of negotiation, and, if necessary, retaliation, whenever our own interests or our relations between our colonies and ourselves are threatened by other people. . . .

"It seems to me that for good or evil this is an issue much greater in its consequences than any of our local disputes. Make a mistake in legislation, it can be corrected; make a mistake in your Imperial policy, it is irretrievable. You have an opportunity; you will never have it again."

Mr. Chamberlain concluded by saying: "I leave the matter in your hands. I desire that a discussion of this subject should be opened."

It became apparent, almost immediately, which of the alternatives he had described Mr. Chamberlain meant to recommend for adoption. In the House of Commons (May 28) he made the momentous declaration: "If you are to give a Preference to the Colonies you must put a tax on food." At the Constitutional Club (June 26) he stated explicitly: "I have already indicated my opinion that a system of Preferential Tariffs is the only system by which this Empire can be kept together." It is to be observed that at this stage a General Tariff on imported manufactures did not form part of Mr. Chamberlain's avowed policy.

The Cabinet were already distracted by internal divisions. Their official attitude was one of provisional non-committal, pending the result of their search after Truth. On the Second Reading of the Finance Bill, early in June, the Prime Minister declared that he would be guilty of a "breach of duty" if he were to profess a "settled" conviction where no

## FISCAL CONTROVERSY: FIRST STAGE

conviction existed. All that was certain, for the moment, was that the Corn Tax had expired; but (as I said in the course of the Debate) it was pure matter of speculation whether the epitaph which we were to carve upon its tombstone was to be *Requiescat* or *Resurgam*. I at the same time pointed out the singularity of the Parliamentary situation:

"Here we have two Ministers of the Crown, seated upon the Treasury Bench, separated the one from the other only by the intervention of the Prime Minister himself. One of them, the Colonial Secretary, is the Minister who is constitutionally responsible for the management of the relations between this country and the outlying parts of the Empire; the other, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is the Minister responsible for the fiscal arrangements of the United Kingdom and a great part of the Empire. These two Ministers are propounding fundamentally and irreconcilably divergent views in a matter which affects more vitally than any other matter in the whole range of politics the unity of the Empire, and the fiscal arrangements and prosperity of the country."

The Free Trade Ministers—the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Lord George Hamilton—were growing more and more restive, and seem to have imparted their inquietudes to the Prime Minister. He sought to allay their anxieties in a remarkable letter to the Duke (June 4, 1903), in the course of which he wrote:<sup>1</sup>

"Chamberlain's views, both in their general outline and their particular details, commit no one but himself. They certainly do not commit me; although I am probably more in sympathy with him than

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Devonshire," II, pp. 307-9.

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either you or Ritchie.<sup>1</sup> . . . My hesitation, however, chiefly arises from doubts as to its practicability rather than its expediency. . . . My hope is that for the present it shall be agreed among us—

“(a) That the question is an open one; and that no one stands committed by any statement but their own.

“(b) That we should be allowed officially to collect information upon the effects of the proposed policy.

“(c) That at all events for the Session we should discourage further explicit statements of individual opinion.”

Tacitly or expressly, the Cabinet seem to have acquiesced in this temporary compromise.<sup>2</sup>

The Cabinet “investigation” proceeded in a more or less informal and leisurely fashion. It resulted in the production of a vast magazine of statistics compiled by the Board of Trade,<sup>3</sup> and Ministers received further assistance in an academic pamphlet on “Insular Free Trade” from the pen of the Prime Minister himself. But, outside the inner circle, people were not slow in making up and expressing their minds. The Liberal Party dashed without delay, and with a united front, into the fray. “All the old war-horses about me—Ripon and Harcourt, for instance” (wrote Campbell-Bannerman)—“are snorting with excitement. We are in for a great time.”<sup>4</sup> . . . On the other hand, the fissure in the Unionists’ ranks

<sup>1</sup> It is a curious personal paradox (as Mr. Chamberlain pointed out at Tynemouth in October, 1903) that “whereas in 1883, or thereabouts, I was convinced of the extreme importance of, and advocated, free imports, at that very time my opponent was Mr. Ritchie, who was advocating Fair Trade and preference to our Colonies.”—(“Imperial Union and Tariff Reform,” p. 109.)

<sup>2</sup> Compare Lord G. Hamilton’s “Reminiscences,” p. 320.

<sup>3</sup> Commonly called “the Fiscal Blue Book.” <sup>4</sup> Spender, II, p. 97.

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deepened and widened day by day. Lord Goschen, in the House of Lords, denounced the new "unauthorized" programme of Mr. Chamberlain with as much fervour as he had denounced the old ; he described it as a "gamble with the food of the people." And the most brilliant of the younger Tories in the House of Commons—Mr. Winston Churchill and Lord Hugh Cecil—were equally outspoken in the same sense.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FISCAL CONTROVERSY: SECOND STAGE

THE proceedings of Ministers when the Cabinet at last reassembled on September 14, 1903, might have been conceived, and were certainly carried out, in the spirit of Comedy. The month of August had been largely occupied by a correspondence, prolix but inconclusive, between the Duke of Devonshire,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour and Mr. Ritchie. Of much more importance was the letter of resignation which Mr. Chamberlain sent on September 9 to the Prime Minister. He admitted that "as an immediate and practical policy the question of Colonial Preference cannot be pressed with any success at the present time." On the other hand, there seemed to him to be a "very strong feeling in favour of the other branch of Fiscal Reform." While, therefore, he thought that Mr. Balfour would be "absolutely justified" in adopting Retaliation as the policy of the Government, he could not himself remain in office while so important a part of his political programme as Preference was excluded. He must therefore devote himself to the work of "explaining and popularizing" it from outside.

Mr. Balfour waited to acknowledge this letter till the 16th (two days after the Cabinet), when he sent a short reply of regretful and sympathetic acquiescence.

When, therefore, the Cabinet met on the 14th,

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Devonshire," II, pp. 321-33.

## FISCAL CONTROVERSY: SECOND STAGE

the Prime Minister had Mr. Chamberlain's resignation in his pocket, a fact which was entirely unknown to his colleagues, and which (strange to relate) does not appear to have been communicated to the Cabinet either by Mr. Balfour or by Mr. Chamberlain himself. After the Cabinet was over the Duke of Devonshire saw Mr. Balfour, who (the Duke has recorded) "hinted that Chamberlain might resign." The Free Trade Ministers (still under the impression that they were asked to commit themselves to Preference) met, and according to one of them (Lord G. Hamilton), "were unanimously of opinion that we had no option but to resign." "One and all of us," he adds, "were then ignorant of Mr. Chamberlain's resignation; and we knew that as long as he was one of the Cabinet preferential tariffs could not be altogether dropped."<sup>1</sup>

The Duke of Devonshire seems to have allowed himself to be befogged at every stage of these curious transactions. He sent in his resignation on the 15th (as did his Free Trade colleagues), but was induced, after a conversation<sup>2</sup> with Mr. Balfour on the 16th, to withdraw it. He was left, however, according to his biographer,<sup>3</sup> in a "tormenting state of mind"; he was a man with a peculiarly keen sense of political honour, and "felt that the Ministers who had resigned must think that he had not stood by them." At last, on October 2 (after what seemed to him an unsatisfactory speech from Mr. Balfour at Sheffield) he resolved to make common cause with them and sent in his definite resignation. On October 6 he wrote to Lord James of Hereford: "I have made a

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Ealing, October 22, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Devonshire," II, p. 347.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351



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mess of this business, and have come out with severe damage, but I suppose you are glad that I have got out at any price."<sup>1</sup>

Two contemporary comments are worth recording—one by Sir William Harcourt, the other by Lord Rosebery.

SIR W. HARCOURT: "There has been nothing like the suppression of the resignation of J. C. since the days of the Oxford-Bolingbroke Cabinet, when they were hatching the Treaty of Utrecht and the fall of Marlborough."<sup>2</sup>

LORD ROSEBERY: "Nothing like the departure of the Colonial Secretary, pairing off with his principal adversaries in the Cabinet, has been seen since Mr. Canning and Lord Castlereagh resigned in order to fight a duel."<sup>3</sup>

The dismasted Cabinet was patched up after a fashion, Mr. Ritchie being succeeded by Mr. Austen Chamberlain at the Exchequer, and Mr. Chamberlain at the Colonial Office (which was offered to, and refused by, Lord Milner) by Mr. Alfred Lyttelton. The vessel and its inmates, as refitted, were unkindly described by Mr. Morley as a "scratch crew on a raft." It was never quite seaworthy, and was doomed from first to last to drift hither and thither without compass or chart.

The last official exposition of the Government attitude at the end of this the first phase of the fiscal controversy is to be found in Mr. Balfour's speech to the Conservative and Constitutional

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Devonshire," II, p. 368.

The final letters between the Duke and the Prime Minister are quite good reading. Mr. Balfour rebukes his correspondent for "expending much inquisitorial subtlety in detecting imaginary heresies"; probably the first and only time in his life that such a charge was levelled against the Duke of Devonshire.—"Life of Devonshire," II, pp. 361-6.

<sup>2</sup> Gardiner, II, p. 561.

<sup>3</sup> Speech at Sheffield, October 13, 1903.

## FISCAL CONTROVERSY: SECOND STAGE

Associations at Sheffield, which gave the *coup de grâce* to the Duke of Devonshire's doubts and hesitations.

He did not think (he said) that public opinion was ripe in this country for the taxation of food, but he called for liberty to negotiate with foreign countries and something to negotiate with.

He put to himself the question: "Do you desire to reverse the fiscal tradition, to alter fundamentally the fiscal tradition, which has prevailed during the last two generations?" "Yes, I do. . . . I propose to alter that tradition by asking the people of this country to reverse, to annul, and delete altogether from their maxims of public conduct the doctrine that you must never put on taxation except for revenue purposes."

This was (perhaps purposely) an incomplete and indefinite presentation of the question, but it cleared the air and opened the lists for the real campaign.

Mr. Chamberlain, in his new character of a free-lance missionary, opened hostilities at Glasgow on October 6, 1903. The programme which he put forward was, in summary, as follows:

### (1) *Proposed New Taxes:*

- 2s. a quarter on foreign (not Colonial) corn,  
with a corresponding tax on foreign flour.
- 5 per cent. on foreign meat, except bacon.
- 5 per cent. on foreign dairy produce.
- An average 10 per cent. on completely-  
manufactured foreign goods.

### (2) *Taxes Not Contemplated:*

*No tax on raw materials. No tax on maize  
or bacon.*

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### (3) *Taxes to be Relieved:*

Three-quarters of the duty off tea.

Half the sugar duty taken off.

Corresponding reduction on coffee and cocoa.

Preference to Colonial wines and fruit.

The main count in his indictment of the existing fiscal system in these autumn speeches was that under it the great British industries were, one after another, succumbing to the competition of their foreign rivals. "Agriculture has been practically destroyed; sugar has gone; silk has gone; iron is threatened; wool is threatened; cotton will go."<sup>1</sup> A curious, and no doubt unconscious, repetition of the language used, nearly twenty years before, by Lord Randolph Churchill at Blackpool, in his transient flirtation with what was then called Fair Trade.<sup>2</sup>

Anyone who desires to follow the main issues of argument and fact, which at once emerged, and were gradually and fully developed as the controversy went on, will find them set out in the series of platform speeches which were republished at the end of 1903 in handy pamphlet form by Mr. Chamberlain and myself. They were respectively entitled:

*Imperial Union and Tariff Reform*: Speeches delivered from May 15 to November 4, 1903. By the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain. (212 pages.) London: Grant Richards. 1s.<sup>3</sup>

*Trade and the Empire*: Mr. Chamberlain's Pro-

<sup>1</sup> Greenock, "Imperial Union," etc., p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> See ante, vol. I, p. 106. and Churchill's "Life," p. 236: "Turn your eyes where you will, survey any branch of British industry you like, you will find signs of mortal disease. . . . You find foreign iron, foreign wool, foreign silk and cotton pouring into the country, flooding you, drowning you, sinking you, swamping you," etc. etc.

<sup>3</sup> I am fortunate enough to possess, and to have before me, a copy of this publication, which was kindly presented to me at the time by Mrs. Chamberlain, inscribed in her hand, "From the Wife of a Man of Business.—M. E. C."

## *FISCAL CONTROVERSY : SECOND STAGE*

posals examined in Four Speeches. By the Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith. (96 pages.) London : Methuen and Co. 6d.

Mr. Chamberlain's parting shot, before he retired for a brief spell into winter quarters, was to announce (Leeds, December 16, 1903) the setting up of a Tariff Commission, whose instruction from him was to " frame a Model Tariff."

## CHAPTER IV

1904-1905

THE main preoccupation of the Government in the Session of 1904 was to avoid any definite pronouncement by the House of Commons on the larger issues of the Fiscal Controversy. The Liberal Opposition naturally seized every opportunity to bring forward embarrassing motions. A typical case was one introduced by Mr. Black on May 18, purporting to "welcome" the declared policy of Ministers to oppose the "taxation of food." The Prime Minister intimated that if this motion were carried he would resign.

The party situation on the Ministerial side was one of grave complexity. In the summer of this year it was computed that Mr. Chamberlain had about 200 supporters of his policy in the House of Commons. On the other hand, the "Unionist Free Fooders," as they came to be called, anxious as they were to frustrate Chamberlain, had, for the most part, no desire to turn out the Government. They clung, as to a welcome *tabula in naufragio*, to the Prime Minister's assurance (in March) that it was not proposed to deal with the Fiscal question during the currency of that Parliament.<sup>1</sup> Some of the more robust spirits could no longer acquiesce in a temporizing policy; Mr. Churchill, for instance, crossed the House to the Liberal side in May.

<sup>1</sup> An amendment in that sense enabled them to avoid voting against and defeating the Government on Mr. Black's motion.

On the other hand, the Liberal Unionist organization, of which the Duke of Devonshire had been President since its formation, was reconstructed by Mr. Chamberlain, so as to include among its purposes the propaganda of Fiscal Preference.

The game, described by Campbell-Bannerman as "hunting the fiscal slipper," went on throughout the year 1904 and the greater part of 1905. It reached almost its final phase when Mr. Balfour announced at Edinburgh (October 3, 1904) his policy to be: (a) No fiscal change during the currency of the then Parliament; (b) if he and his friends won the next election, the Colonies to be invited to a fiscal Conference: (c) if an agreement were come to at the Conference, it was to be submitted to the country at another General Election. It need hardly be said that the prospect, so opened out, of organized procrastination was equally distasteful to the Chamberlainites and the Unionist Free Fooders. Equally, and even more, exasperating to the Liberals was the practice, officially adopted in the House of Commons in the Session of 1905, of boycotting the discussion of the matter there. In March and April, Free Trade motions were allowed to be carried with unanimity, the Government and the faithful among its followers deserting both debate and division. Things reached a climax on May 22, when, after Campbell-Bannerman had asked a number of questions of the Prime Minister personally, Mr. Lyttelton was put up to reply. The Opposition refused to hear him, and after a scene of deplorable clamour the sitting had to be suspended.

All this time the Government, to judge by such indications as the by-elections, was steadily losing ground in the country. In more than one case Ministers

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seeking re-election on the acceptance of office were defeated at the polls. There were other causes of disintegration and unpopularity at work besides the fiscal chaos. C.-B. reports the Prime Minister as having said of himself: "I am like a man with a chronic cold who knows that the slightest fresh chill will kill him."<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of indentured Chinese Labour on the Rand under semi-servile conditions, approved by the new Colonial Secretary, Mr. Lyttelton,<sup>2</sup> aroused an outcry in Great Britain which was by no means confined to the regular Opposition.

Moreover, the Cabinet were getting into trouble with some of their most ardent supporters over their Irish policy. Mr. George Wyndham had won his spurs during the Coercion regime as private secretary to Mr. Balfour. He was one of the three "promising" young men in the Tory Party, about whom in the nineties their friends and admirers used to dispute which was the most certain in the long run to attain to the highest place. The other two were George Curzon and Harry Cust. I knew them all intimately, and alas! though they were much younger than myself, none of them now survives. They were very differently endowed, but each of them combined brilliant intellectual gifts with much personal charm. In the autumn of 1898, Curzon, who had been for some time Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, was appointed Viceroy of India; Mr. Brodrick was transferred from the War Office to take his place; and Wyndham (apparently after some hesitation on the part of Lord Salisbury, who said: "I don't like

<sup>1</sup> Spender, II, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> It is at least doubtful whether Mr. Chamberlain would ever have given his sanction to this short-sighted and ill-judged expedient.

poets") was given the post of Under-Secretary for War.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 1900 he was made Chief Secretary for Ireland, and in 1902 admitted to the Cabinet.

In the Session of 1903 he carried through the House of Commons with great ability and tact, and infinite assiduity, an Irish Land Bill, which was ingeniously contrived to facilitate the transfer of ownership in full from landlord to occupier upon terms which, by the aid of an Imperial subvention, made both parties to the transaction better off than they were before.<sup>2</sup> The Bill, which was not seriously opposed in any quarter, received the Royal Assent in August.

The clouds which gradually eclipsed Wyndham's meteoric star arose from his selection, towards the end of 1902, of a distinguished Anglo-Indian, Sir Antony (afterwards Lord) MacDonnell, for the post of Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle. The original suggestion that Sir Antony should be invited to take the place seems to have come from Lord Lansdowne, who had known and appreciated his great work in India. The assistance which he gave, both in the preparation and conduct of the Land Bill and in the whole sphere of Irish Administration, proved of such value that in 1903 he was induced by Wyndham, with the approval of the King, to refuse the offer, which the Secretary of State for India was about to make to him, of the Governorship of Bombay.

MacDonnell had from the first, when his co-operation was asked and agreed to be given, made it perfectly clear that he had no affiliations or sympathies with the rank and file of the Tory

<sup>1</sup> There is a lively account of this business in "Life and Letters of George Wyndham," pp. 66-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-5.



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Unionists. "An Irishman, a Roman Catholic, and a Liberal in politics" was the description which he gave of himself to Wyndham, when he was appointed (with some misgivings on the part of Mr. Balfour) to become permanent head of the Irish Administration.

Wyndham was a highly strung man, totally without the toughness and phlegm of the Anglo-Saxon temperament. In the Session of 1904 his colleagues gave him no opportunities for the further pursuit of an Irish constructive policy. "I am undergoing," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "a phase of nausea at politics, nostalgia for poetry, and a lurch in that direction." He spent Whitsuntide in Paris, sitting for his bust to Rodin, "in the desire to keep touch with letters and sculpture, and so keep an escape way open from the dustiness and fustiness of politics." These were the premonitory symptoms of what the doctors call a "nervous breakdown," and, when the autumn came, he fled from official business to Germany, leaving MacDonnell behind him with instructions not to forward any papers that could await his return.<sup>2</sup>

During his absence the Under-Secretary gave active help to Lord Dunraven and his associates in a body of "Moderates," calling themselves the "Irish Reform Association," who issued a preliminary "manifesto" at the end of August, and near the end of September gave to the world a full-blown "Devolution" Scheme. It is not necessary to set out its details.<sup>3</sup> In the words of Lord Dunraven, "it gave Ireland some control over finance, some incentive to economy . . . and some delegated legislative powers," with the result that it exasperated almost equally both Nationalists

<sup>1</sup> "Life and Letters of George Wyndham," p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-3.

and Unionists. It was denounced by Michael Davitt as a "wooden-horse stratagem." Sir Edward Carson declared that he preferred "the repeal of the Union to any such tampering." The scheme died on the day of its birth.

MacDonnell had been careful to give the Chief Secretary full warning of the part he was taking in the matter. On September 10 he wrote to him: "I have helped and am helping Dunraven in the business." This letter was undoubtedly received and opened by Wyndham, who mislaid it; whether he even read it is doubtful; and it seems certain that it entirely passed from his memory.<sup>1</sup> As soon as the "scheme" itself was given to the world, he at once wrote a letter to *The Times* (September 26) repudiating it root and branch on behalf of the Government and himself.

The Cabinet conveyed a mild censure to Sir A. MacDonnell, whose conduct in the matter, from first to last, seems to have been quite irreproachable. Wyndham, but for whose carelessness, which may be excused by the state of his health, the storm would never have arisen, stuck, as any gentleman in the circumstances was bound to do, by his subordinate. The whole pack of Irish Unionism was in full cry, scenting a "conspiracy," and calling for the brush, one day of MacDonnell, and the next of the Chief Secretary himself. Wyndham made a confused, intricate and unconvincing defence in the House of Commons, which left the impression even upon not unfriendly minds that (as I said in the debate) "there was a mystery not wholly cleared up." The controversy continued with growing heat and even venom, and early in March (1905) Wyndham

<sup>1</sup> "Life and Letters of George Wyndham," p. 97.

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sent in his resignation. There can be no doubt that the state of his health at the time unfitted him to carry on the work of administration. But he declined to make that the ground of his retirement. His real reason was apparently that "stated to one of his most intimate friends" at the time :

"I must insist on resigning ; not because of health, not because of MacDonnell, but because *my* policy—which is *not* the policy of the Reform Association—cannot proceed now. . . . I will not see concession after concession made to people from whom I differ."<sup>1</sup>

It is not difficult to identify the "people from whom I differ." But what did he mean by "*my* policy" ?

His resignation was accepted, and announced (in somewhat frigid terms) by the Prime Minister to the House of Commons (March 6). He was succeeded by a true-blue Tory—Mr. Walter Long.

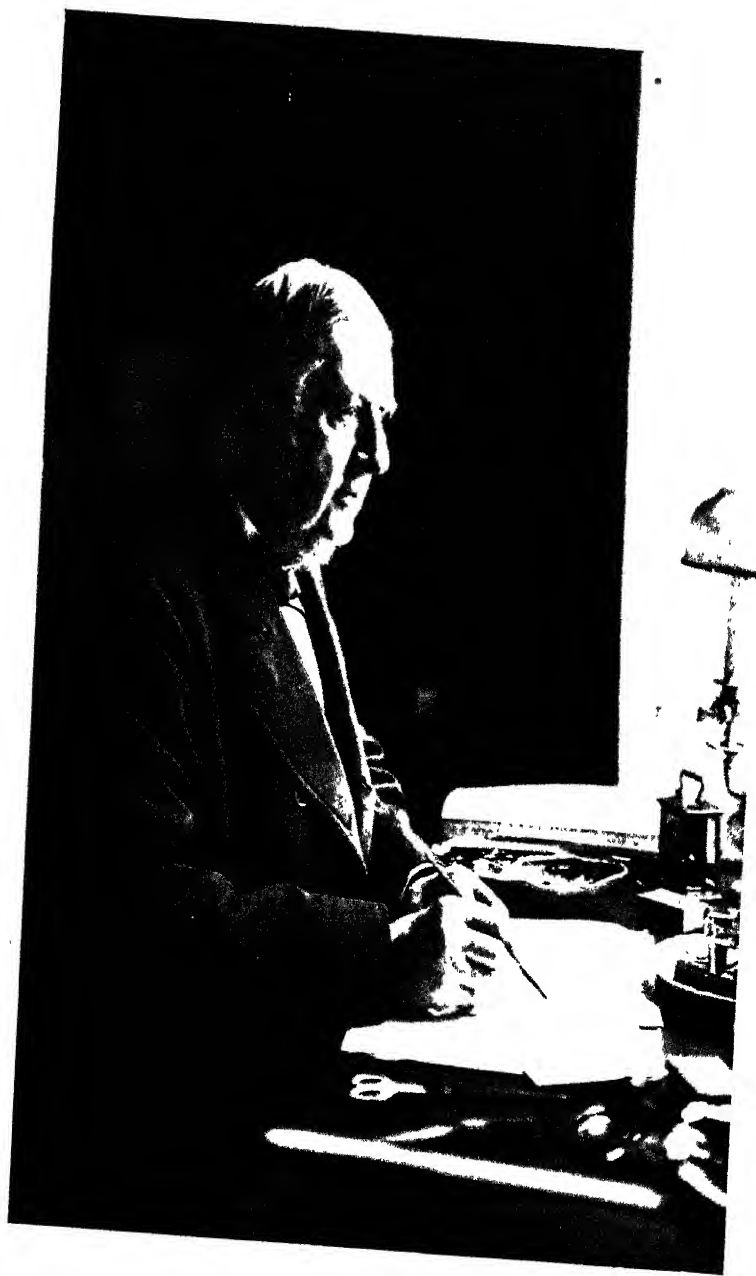
During the remainder of the Session the Government underwent a series of those checks and disappointments, petty in themselves, which so often presage the approach of the end.

A great historic figure was removed from the scene by the death of Sir William Harcourt on September 30, 1904. The Liberal Old Guard suffered another severe personal loss in the disabling illness which fell upon Lord Spencer in the autumn of 1905, and which lasted until his death in August, 1910.<sup>2</sup>

It may, therefore, be the appropriate place for a brief reference to one who played at moments a

<sup>1</sup> "Life and Letters of George Wyndham," p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> See Spender, II, p. 179.



SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

*Photo: Hanes.*



conspicuous, and always a most dignified and honourable, part on the political stage.

C.-B., who was a shrewd and by no means a sentimental judge of men, had a higher regard and affection for Spencer than for any of his colleagues. Superficially the two men had little in common. The one belonged by birth and all the associations of his youth and early manhood to the Scottish bourgeoisie. He had acquired more than a tincture of classical scholarship both at Glasgow University and at Cambridge; had made himself familiar by travel with most of the European countries; was widely read, especially in French literature; spoke the French language with fluency and precision; was in a real sense a Cosmopolitan; and yet retained to the end of his life a tenacious and predominant interest in the soil and the people from which he sprang. Spencer was a patrician, with a distinguished pedigree and large ancestral estates; without literary accomplishments or interests; fond of the open air, the Master for years of one of the most famous packs of hounds in the English shires; with few gifts of expression either in speech or in writing; bred in the pure Whig tradition; a man of unquailing courage, of cool, shrewd judgment, and the finest sense of honour and public duty; almost the last, if not the last, of the *Grands Seigneurs*. As I have said above,<sup>1</sup> when Mr. Gladstone for the last time resigned the office of Prime Minister, he was prepared, if Queen Victoria had asked his advice, to name Spencer as, in his judgment, the person best fitted to be his successor.

He and Campbell-Bannerman were first brought into close personal and official relations when the latter was invited to succeed Sir G. Trevelyan as

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, vol. I, p. 217.

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Chief Secretary for Ireland in October 1884. It was not on the face of it a tempting offer. C.-B. had no first-hand knowledge of Ireland, where the administrative situation was still one of difficulty and danger. The Viceroy was a member of the Cabinet, the Chief Secretary was not, and yet it was his daily task to be called upon in the House of Commons to explain and defend, against the pertinacious and vigilant scrutiny of the most highly-organized body of guerrillas that Parliament has ever seen, every act and omission, great or small, of the Irish Government. Spencer came over to Scotland himself to press upon C.-B. the acceptance of Mr. Gladstone's request. No wonder that he at first refused. "I know," he wrote (October 14, 1884) to Spencer, "the limit of my own capacities, and I should be greatly afraid that I should fail to discharge my duties successfully." And he adds the significant words: "At the same time I confess I should be hampered by want of belief in the system I was called upon to defend."<sup>1</sup> Lord Spencer, however, persisted in his appeal, to which C.-B. felt bound to yield, and the partnership between the two men began, and lasted through months of infinite and ceaseless care, until the fall of the Gladstone Government in the following June. Events showed that C.-B. was right to take the chance; he became, during those months, for the first time a distinctive figure in the House of Commons; and his keen humour and imperturbable temper made him an invaluable asset to his colleagues and his Chief. "I shall be very sorry," wrote Spencer, "that our official relations should close. They have been delightful to me, and I cannot thank you too much for the confidence you have placed in me, and

<sup>1</sup> Spender, I, pp. 59-60.

1904-1905

the cordial and generous way you have worked with me."<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Spender truly says: C.-B.'s friendship and admiration for Lord Spencer remained to the end of his life one of the strongest of his political attachments. They were bound together by a native affinity of character.

<sup>1</sup> Spender, I, p. 87.



## CHAPTER V

### THE END OF THE UNIONIST REGIME

THE political situation was, in the autumn of 1905, to all appearance in the highest degree confused and uncertain. The Liberals, notwithstanding the discredit into which the Government had fallen, had domestic troubles of their own. The Free Trade army which Mr. Chamberlain's propaganda had by antagonism filled not only with recruits, but with a spirit of aggressive vitality, now numbered in its ranks many who were lukewarm, and not a few who remained hostile, to Irish Home Rule. After much discussion with colleagues, including Sir E. Grey and myself, C.-B. adopted for the next Parliament what was called at the time the "step by step" policy, "always on condition that the steps should lead up to, and be consistent with, the final goal of a Parliament in Dublin."<sup>1</sup> This was the gist of his famous speech at Stirling (November 23, 1905), as appears from the following extract :

"If I were asked for advice—which is not likely, perhaps—by an ardent Irish Nationalist, I would say : 'Your desire is, as mine is, to see the effective management of Irish affairs in the hands of a representative Irish Authority. If I were you I would take it in any way I can get it, and if an instalment of representative control was offered to you, or any administrative improvements, I would advise you thankfully to accept it, provided it was consistent with and led up to your larger policy.' I think that

<sup>1</sup> Spender, II, p. 181.

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would be good advice. But I lay stress on the proviso—it must be consistent with and lead up to the larger policy. To secure good administration is one thing, and a good thing in itself, but good government can never be a substitute for government by the people themselves. In the immediate future, whatever be the result of a General Election, the time of Parliament will probably be mainly occupied by certain great questions—social questions for the most part—which call for treatment, and on which opinion among us is more than ripe. . . . Undoubtedly they will take time. I trust that the opportunity of making a great advance on this question of Irish Government will not be long delayed; and when that opportunity comes, my firm and honest belief is, that a greater measure of agreement than hitherto as to the ultimate solution will be found possible, and that a keener appreciation will be felt of the benefits which will flow to the entire community of British peoples throughout the world if Ireland, from being disaffected, disheartened, impoverished, and disunited, takes her place, a strong, harmonious, and contented portion of the Empire.”

Probably through misunderstanding Sir Henry’s intention and meaning, Lord Rosebery, two days later at Bodmin, construed the speech as “the hoisting once more in its most pronounced form of the flag of Irish Home Rule,” and while disclaiming the desire to “utter one jarring note which can conflict with the unity of the Free Trade Party,” declared for himself personally, “*emphatically and explicitly, and once for all, that I cannot serve under that banner.*”

It seems not improbable that this sharp passage of arms between the two Liberal leaders was one of the precipitating causes of Mr. Balfour’s resignation.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

But during these critical months things were going much worse in the Unionist Party. On November 3 Mr. Chamberlain, whose patience was—perhaps not unnaturally—exhausted, in a speech at Birmingham, declared that he would “rather be part of a powerful minority than a member of an impotent majority,” and demanded a Dissolution. He was backed up by the Liberal Unionist Council at Bristol, where he compared the Unionist Party to an army which was being led into battle “on the principle that the lamest man should govern its march.” Even the National Union of Conservative Associations was induced to pass (at Newcastle) a resolution in favour of the “whole-hog” policy.<sup>1</sup>

The situation had at last become intolerable, and Mr. Balfour found himself confronted with the alternatives of Resignation or Dissolution. He chose Resignation.

I may be allowed to quote here what I have written elsewhere on this singular and momentous decision :

“Mr. Balfour was reputed at that time to be a past-master of political tactics. He had been exhibiting for more than two years a series of adroit and astonishing feats in the art of plate-spinning. It was believed by many that, by the *coup de théâtre* to which he now resorted, he would succeed in the operation, of which a previous Tory Prime Minister forty years before had boasted—that of ‘dishing the Whigs.’ His idolaters would have scoffed at the idea that so wily a performer could be outmanœuvred by the ‘plain and simple’ Campbell-Bannerman. Yet this is precisely what happened.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spender, II, pp. 188–9.

<sup>2</sup> “Studies and Sketches,” p. 205.

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Mr. Balfour resigned on December 4. The King, who had developed friendly and, indeed, confidential personal relations with Sir Henry in the earlier part of the autumn at Marienbad, at once sent for him. To the surprise and confutation of the political quidnuncs, he accepted office without a moment's hesitation (December 5), and by midnight on the 7th all the principal places in the new Government had been filled; not without some difficulties as to personnel, which, however, yielded rapidly to the good-will and sense of duty of those immediately concerned.

There was one, and only one, conspicuous gap in the new combination. It did not include Lord Rosebery. With this notable exception all sections of the Liberal Party were represented in the new Cabinet, which was composed as follows:—

Prime Minister .. ..	Campbell-Bannerman
Lord Chancellor .. ..	*Loreburn
President of Council ..	*Crewe
Privy Seal .. ..	Ripon
Chancellor of Exchequer ..	Asquith
Home Secretary .. ..	*H. Gladstone
Foreign Secretary.. ..	*E. Grey
Colonial Secretary ..	*Elgin
War Secretary .. ..	*Haldane
India Secretary .. ..	J. Morley
Admiralty .. ..	Tweedmouth
Board of Trade .. ..	*Ll. George
Local Government Board..	*Burns
Duchy of Lancaster ..	Fowler
Agriculture.. ..	*Carrington
Post Office.. ..	*Buxton
Ireland .. ..	Bryce
Scotland .. ..	*Sinclair
Education .. ..	*Birrell

## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

Those marked \* had never sat in a Cabinet before; and five (Haldane, Lloyd George, Burns, Birrell and Sinclair) were new to office. Of Lord Rosebery's surviving colleagues, Spencer was permanently disabled, Trevelyan and Acland had retired from Parliamentary life, and Shaw-Lefevre was called to the House of Lords.

Notable members of the new Government, who were not yet admitted to the Cabinet, were McKenna, W. Churchill, H. Samuel, Runciman and L. Harcourt.

It was acknowledged on all hands that in point of Parliamentary ability the new Administration gave promise of exceptional strength.

Parliament was at once dissolved, and the General Election which followed in January, 1906, was one of the most remarkable in our modern history. The Unionists in the House of Commons were reduced from 369 to 157; the Liberals numbered 379. There were 83 Irish Nationalists and 51 so-called Labour Members. The Liberals had, therefore, a majority over all other parties combined of 88, and over the Unionists of 222. Of the "Labour" Members 20 were to all intents and purposes Liberal. A striking feature of the Election was that the remainder (some 30 in number) were returned as a separate group of independent Labour men. Their chairman from 1906 to 1908 was Mr. Keir Hardie, who had sat in previous Parliaments; among the newcomers first returned in 1906 was Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.

The personal losses among the Unionist leaders were, up to that date, unprecedented. They included Mr. Balfour, Mr. Brodrick, Mr. Lyttelton, Mr. Gerald Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law and Sir R. Finlay. Lord Hugh Cecil was defeated in a three-cornered contest

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at Greenwich, where he stood as a Unionist Free Trader against a Tariff Reformer and a Liberal. Both Hicks Beach and Ritchie had gone to the House of Lords.

An incidental feature of this historic Election is that it witnessed the first active steps in the militant campaign of the "Suffragettes."

We must now turn over a new leaf.

## CHAPTER VI

### A NEW ISSUE

THE Fiscal controversy was determined by the General Election of 1906, and ceased to be one of the living issues in British politics. It was in the course of a belated attempt to revive it in the new House of Commons that Campbell-Bannerman was moved to use the blunt expression, "Enough of this foolery." (March 12, 1906.)

In the same year the great figure which had brought it into being, and kept it alive, was removed from the battlefield. Mr. Chamberlain led the Opposition in the early part of the first Session, in Mr. Balfour's compulsory absence, with all his customary vigour and activity. Early in July he attended a series of celebrations in Birmingham to commemorate his seventieth birthday and the completion of the thirtieth year of his Parliamentary service. A few days later he was seized by a disabling malady from which he never recovered; and, though he remained a Member of the House of Commons, the only occasions on which he went there during the remaining eight years of his life were to take the Oath at the opening of the two new Parliaments of 1910 and 1911.

I may perhaps cite a few sentences from the speech which I made in the House of Commons in moving its adjournment on the day of his funeral, exactly a month before the outbreak of the Great War. (July 6, 1914.)

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‘ Mr. Chamberlain was for thirty years in the forefront of our Parliamentary life. That he never held the title of Leader of this House or of the Head of the Government is felt, by friends and foes alike, to be an accident of his career. . . . To the arena of our political conflicts here Mr. Chamberlain brought not only a combination of most unusual gifts, but, what is rarer still, a new type of personality. When he entered the House in 1876 almost all the places of authority, both in the Legislature and in successive Administrations, were still held by men who had received their Parliamentary training in the era of a restricted suffrage. Mr. Chamberlain was the pioneer of a new generation. He brought with him from the world of business and of municipal life a freshness of outlook, a directness of purpose, and a certain impatience of conventional and circuitous methods. He may be said with truth to have introduced and perfected a new style of speaking, equally removed from that of either of the great masters of speech who then had the ear of the House and the nation—Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright. If he kept, as a rule, closer to the ground, he rarely digressed, and he never lost his way. . . .

“ As has been the case with not a few great men, speech, the fashion and mode of his speech, was with him the expression and revelation of character. In that striking personality—vivid, masterful, resolute, tenacious—there were no blurred or nebulous outlines, there were no relaxed fibres, there were no moods of doubt and hesitation, there were no pauses of lethargy. . . .

“ There are certain characteristics stamped on his work which are independent of the vicissitudes of political judgment, and some of which I think are



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the more worthy of remark because he was a man of severely practical aims. First, I note genuine sympathy which never failed him with the precarious lot of those who in one way or another fall victims to the stress and strain of our social and industrial life. Another is the imaginative quality which suffused and coloured, not only his language, but his ideas when he confronted the larger issues of national policy. Lastly, may I not say, no statesman of our own or perhaps of any time surpassed him in the two great qualities of confidence and courage—confidence, buoyant and unperturbed, in the justice of his cause; courage, persistent and undismayed, in its steadfast pursuit. . . .

“ Though he was an unsparing he was always a generous antagonist, and I rejoice to remember that we never ceased to be friends. It was the will of Providence that the closing years of his life should be darkened by a great affliction. The hero of countless fights in the open field was called upon to show that he had also the passive courage which can face with undimmed eyes the most tragic fate that can befall a man of action.”

The most pressing problems which confronted the new Government and Parliament were to be found in South Africa: the future status of the two defeated Republics, and the best method of handling the question of Chinese Labour. The grant of responsible Self-government to the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, though vehemently denounced by the Opposition at the time as a dangerous and reckless experiment, is now universally acknowledged to have been a far-sighted and statesmanlike measure. The new Transvaal Government decided that the Labour Ordinance should not be re-enacted, and in June,

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1907, Mr. Churchill—the Under-Secretary for the Colonies—was able to say: “We have reached the end of Chinese Labour.”

A detailed and authoritative account of these transactions is to be found in Mr. Spender’s *Life of Campbell-Bannerman*.<sup>1</sup> The debates enabled Mr. Churchill to enrich the Parliamentary vocabulary with a useful periphrasis: “terminological inexactitude.”<sup>2</sup>

A new issue was almost immediately raised, when the Liberal Government with its unexampled majority, fresh from the decisive verdict of the constituencies, began the attempt to carry into law the projects to which it was pledged. So far as legislation is concerned, the History of Parliament from 1906 to 1911 is the record of a protracted and persistent struggle between the representative and the non-representative Chambers. It will be well, before dealing with particular measures, to survey in its broader aspects the field of controversy.

Mr. Balfour, on the morrow of his own electoral defeat at Manchester, made a speech (Nottingham, January 15, 1906) to a Unionist demonstration which struck the note of challenge. It was, he said, the bounden duty of each one whom he addressed to do his best to see that “the great Unionist Party should *still control, whether in power or whether in Opposition, the destinies of this great Empire.*”

This was, in effect, a claim that a Party which had just been almost contemptuously repudiated by the electorate should still, through the only agency at its disposal, the House of Lords, reassert and retain its political predominance. A more cautious politician,

<sup>1</sup> II, Chapter XXIX.

<sup>2</sup> February 22, 1906.

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the Duke of Devonshire, adopted a more moderate tone. Speaking a month later (February 22) in the House of Lords, he said :

“ During the last ten years the opinions on most political questions of the majority in both Houses have been in tolerably close agreement, and your Lordships have had little to do more than to give your assent to measures sent up from the other House, or to introduce comparatively unimportant amendments in those measures. This position is now, as a result of the Election, fundamentally altered. It cannot be denied that on most political questions the opinions of the majority of the House of Commons are not in harmony with, but are opposed to, the opinions held by the great majority of this House. That difference in the political opinions represented in the two Houses will, no doubt—must, no doubt, find its expression in the measures which will be sent to you from the other House of Parliament ; and it will be for your Lordships and the Leaders of this House to consider how far it may be wise, how far it may be prudent, how far it may be the duty of this House, to exercise its constitutional rights in relation to those measures. I feel perfectly confident that the advice which will be given to your Lordships’ House will be wise and statesmanlike, and will be based to a very great extent on the wise and statesmanlike advice which on more than one occasion was given to this House by the late Lord Salisbury. But, in my opinion, a great deal depends not only on the treatment of Bills that may come up from the other House, but on what may be the constructive policy adopted by the Unionist Party when at any future time it returns to power.”

As time went on, it became increasingly clear that

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it was Mr. Balfour's, and not the Duke's, advice which was to sway the counsels of the Unionist Party.

Though it involves some anticipation of events, I think this is the appropriate place to set out a summary of the situation as it gradually developed, in a Memorandum which I wrote when it had reached a critical stage in 1910 :

" There are about 600 Members of the House of Lords, of whom 26 sit on the Episcopal Bench and are not ostensibly Party politicians. Of the remaining 570 or 580, it is probably within the mark to say that 500 belong to the Conservative or Unionist Party. It is true that a considerable number of peers rarely attend or vote, but in an emergency they respond with a good deal of alacrity to the Party Whip. . . .

" It follows that difficulties between the two Houses were only likely to arise when the electors returned a Liberal majority to the House of Commons and put a Liberal Government in power. In 1884 an acute crisis was developed over the Franchise Bill, and a constitutional readjustment was only avoided by a compromise, the history of which, and of the parts played by the Crown and the leaders of the two Parties, is told in detail in Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone*. Ten years later, under the Liberal Government which held office from 1892 to 1895, grave differences again manifested themselves between the two Houses. But the Liberal majority in the House of Commons was at that time a very small one—including the Irish Nationalists, it did not exceed 40—and it had not behind it popular opinion in Great Britain. Nevertheless, Mr. Gladstone, in the last speech which he delivered in the House of Commons, in the spring of 1894, thought it necessary to use these

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words: 'In some way or other a resolution will have to be found for this tremendous contrariety and incessant conflict upon matters of high principle and profound importance between the representatives of the people and those who fill a nominated Chamber.'

"The General Elections of 1895 and 1900 gave the Unionist Party in each case a substantial majority, with the natural consequence that for ten years (1895-1905) there was no occasion of conflict between the two Houses, and the Constitutional question lay dormant.

"It was reawakened into restless and vigorous life in the next four years. The General Election of January, 1906, gave the Liberal Party in the House of Commons an overwhelming majority, not only over the Unionists, but over all other sections combined. That majority set to work with earnestness and assiduity to secure legislative embodiment for the pledges which its Members had given to their constituents. In a few instances, of which the Trade Disputes Bill is the most conspicuous, the Lords allowed proposals which they disliked to pass into law. But as regards by far the larger part of the important contentious measures introduced by the Liberal Government, and sanctioned by unexampled majorities in the House of Commons, the history of the years 1906-9 is one of almost perpetual controversy between the two Houses, and of a series of defeats inflicted by the non-representative upon the representative Chamber."

In the following Chapters a brief narrative is attempted of the different stages of the controversy.

## CHAPTER VII

1906

THE first serious conflict between the new House of Commons and the House of Lords arose out of the Education Bill of 1906, which was introduced by Mr. Birrell on behalf of the Government in April. Its main objects were to put an end to the dual system created by the Act of 1902; to secure that every school maintained out of rates and taxes should be under the exclusive management and control of the representative local Authority; to abolish religious tests and the obligation to give denominational teaching, in the case of all teachers appointed by the Authority, and paid out of public funds; to permit "Cowper Temple" teaching in the "provided" schools; and in the "transferred" schools to give facilities for special denominational instruction, but not by the regular teachers.

The Bill was strenuously and even bitterly opposed as unfair to the denominational schools; as a practical endowment of Nonconformity; and as a stepping-stone to secularization. But, notwithstanding the alliance of the Irish Nationalists with the regular Opposition, the Second and Third Readings were carried in the House of Commons by majorities of about 200. On the Third Reading Mr. Balfour gave what came to be called his "signal" to the House of Lords, when he remarked that "Members must have begun to feel that the real discussion must be elsewhere," and that "it is in the highest degree

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improbable that the Bill will come back in the shape in which it leaves us."

The Bill was conducted with conspicuous ability and tact by Lord Crewe in the House of Lords, where, however, it was completely transformed. It came back to the Commons, in the picturesque language of Mr. Birrell, a "miserable, mangled, tortured, twisted *tertium quid*." The question of special denominational instruction, and of the functions and duties, in regard to it, of the State-paid teachers, was the main bone of contention.

There were negotiations and attempts to arrive at a compromise between the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Lansdowne on the one side, and the Prime Minister, Lord Crewe, and myself on the other, but the chasm of opinion was found to be too wide to be bridged. On December 12 the House of Commons—the Nationalists now supporting the Government—referred back the Lords' Amendments *in globo*, by a majority of more than 300; on the 19th the Lords insisted on their Amendments by a majority of 132 to 52, the Duke of Devonshire voting in the minority; and the following day, in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister moved to discharge the order, and the Bill perished.

In the same Session a similar fate befell the Plural Voting Bill, introduced in May by Mr. L. Harcourt, who made his maiden speech from the Treasury Bench—a rare, though not unique, occurrence in the history of the House of Commons. The Third Reading was carried in December by a majority of more than three to one, but a week later the Bill was summarily rejected in the Lords by 143 to 43.

The nature and the grounds of the resentment which these proceedings had, by the end of the first

Session of the new Parliament, aroused in the Liberal Party, cannot be better indicated than in the following sentences from the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons when he moved that the order for the Education Bill be discharged (December 20, 1906) :

" Now, the question we have to ask ourselves is this : Is the General Election and its result to go for nothing ? This Education question has been before the country since 1902, and even earlier. It has been discussed and re-discussed. The Act of 1902 has been the cause of intense bitterness and dissatisfaction. The grievance created by it and the flaws in its administrative structure are such that there can be no peace, no settlement, no ordered progress in the work of education until the law is altered from its present condition. No one denies it. No one denies that that was the opinion which helped to return the great majority sent by the constituencies this time last year. No one denies the strength of the reflection of that opinion in this House. Who could deny it, when these very amendments were returned to the House of Lords but a few days ago by a majority of 309 ?

" Well, Sir, at the bidding of a Party which was condemned at the General Election, condemned as no Party was ever condemned before, the House of Lords has obliterated all this. I desire to speak with perfect moderation and calmness, but it is difficult to reconcile such action on the part of the other House with that calm and impartial revision of hasty legislation which is assumed to be the greatest merit of that Assembly. Perhaps it is harder to see how that action justifies the claim that they are the true interpreters of the feelings and desires of the people of this



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country. But even if it were so, what is the good of maintaining a Representative system? It is not as if this House of Commons were old, stale, and worn out; if that were so, there would be some reason we could understand in the argument; but there is no reason in the argument to-day. It is plainly intolerable, Sir, that a Second Chamber should, while one Party in the State is in power, be its willing servant, and when that Party has received an unmistakable and emphatic condemnation by the country, the House of Lords should then be able to neutralize, thwart, and distort the policy which the electors have approved. That is the state of things that for the moment—for the nonce—we must submit to. A settlement of this grave question of Education has been prevented, and for that calamity we know, and the country knows, upon whom the responsibility lies.

“But, Sir, the resources of the British Constitution are not wholly exhausted, the resources of the House of Commons are not exhausted, and I say with conviction that a way must be found, a way will be found, by which the will of the people expressed through their elected representatives will be made to prevail.”

## CHAPTER VIII

1907

IT is not necessary to review in any detail the legislation, actual or attempted, of 1907. Mr. Harcourt succeeded in carrying through both Houses a Small Holdings and Allotments Bill for England, but the acute scent of the Lords detected revolutionary germs in Mr. Sinclair's proposals for the extension of the crofter system to the Lowlands, and for Land Valuation in Scotland, the one of which had to be withdrawn by the Government, while the other was summarily rejected.<sup>1</sup> The conflict between the two Houses was therefore renewed, and the Government found it necessary to formulate definite proposals for bringing the matter to an issue. There was complete agreement among its members that a reform in the composition of the House of Lords was necessary, and indeed overdue. But they were equally agreed that before that delicate and thorny task was attempted there must be a revision and curtailment of its powers. As to the form which such a change should take, there was for a time much difference and even contrariety of opinion, but in the end the Government adopted the plan of what came to be known as the Suspensory Veto, suggested many years before by Mr. John Bright at Birmingham,<sup>2</sup> strongly favoured by the Prime Minister himself, and afterwards given statutory effect by the Parliament Act of 1911.

<sup>1</sup> Both were again passed through the Commons in 1908, but perished from disagreement in the two Houses.

<sup>2</sup> August 4, 1834.

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Accordingly, on June 24, 1907, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman introduced a resolution in the House of Commons which declared that "in order to give effect to the will of the people, as expressed by their elected representatives, the power of the other House to alter or reject Bills passed by this House must be restricted by law, so as to secure that, within the limits of a single Parliament, the final decision of the Commons should prevail." After a debate which lasted three days the resolution was carried by 432 to 147. A Labour Amendment, calling for the abolition of the House of Lords, and supported by a number of Radicals and Nationalists, was rejected by 315 to 100.

I may quote a passage from the speech which I made in the course of the discussion to show the stage which the controversy had reached :

"Personally I have been a slow and, to some degree, even a reluctant convert to the necessity of this particular method of dealing with the problem. I have cast about—as which of us has not ?—during all these years of Opposition in this House, to try and discover some way of escape from the situation, which almost every speaker in this debate, on whichever side of the House he sits, has acknowledged to be indefensible, that would at one and the same time give effect to the democratic principle that the will of the people must prevail, and do the least practical violence to our constitutional usages. I have even—scandalous as I am sure the avowal will seem to some friends behind me—at one time coquetted with the Referendum. But hoping, as many of us have hoped, that a solution could be found in the shape of what I may call a constitutional *modus vivendi*—a Convention similar to the Conventions of which both our Common law and our Parliamentary law are full,

not written on paper, not defined in the exact language of an Act of Parliament—hoping for the establishment of such a *modus vivendi* (a re-establishment, let me remind the House, of a practice which actually prevailed sixty or even fifty years ago, when the House of Lords submitted to the sagacious guidance of the Duke of Wellington, Lord Aberdeen, and other statesmen of the past), the experiences of recent years have convinced me that that is an unattainable hope. Yes ; but why ? Because it would be the essence of such an understanding that the House of Lords—admittedly, in the language of the Leader of the Opposition, a subordinate partner, admittedly powerless to control executive action or financial policy—should, in the sphere of legislation also, be content with the functions of revision and consultation, and, if need arose, of reasonable delay. But has the House of Lords shown any disposition to accept such an understanding ? It has fallen, unfortunately, in these latter days into the hands of guides and leaders—not necessarily and not always sitting within its own walls—who have degraded it from the position of a revising Chamber, and in some sense an arbitral authority, and who have converted it, as everybody knows, into the docile and subservient instrument of a single Party in the State. That is the crux of the whole problem. . . . The truth is that in practice the House of Lords gives effect to the will of the House of Commons when you have a Tory majority ; the House of Lords frustrates the will of the House of Commons when you have a Liberal majority ; and neither in the one case nor in the other does it consider—what, indeed, it has no means of ascertaining—the will of the people.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, June 26, 1907.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RECONSTRUCTED GOVERNMENT

THE closing months of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's life are fully described in Mr. Spender's Biography, and nothing can fitly be added to his narrative. I hope that my judgment of him as man and statesman has been made clear in the preceding chapters. I will add here some words which I wrote in a review of the Biography when it first appeared :

" I endeavoured after his (Campbell-Bannerman's) death, in a speech in the House of Commons which Mr. Spender has quoted in full, to give an estimate of him as I knew him. I have nothing to add to it now. His was by no means the simple personality which many people supposed ; it had its complexities and apparent incongruities, and, even to those who were most intimate with him, sometimes its baffling features.<sup>1</sup> But of all the men with whom I have been associated in public life, I put him as high as any in sense of duty, and in both moral and intellectual courage. Nothing can be truer or more characteristic of the man than what he says of himself in a homely speech to his neighbours at Montrose, a few months before his death :

" ' Altogether, I have no fault to find with anybody. And it is because I have no fault to find with anybody that I am where I am. . . . It has not been by my

<sup>1</sup> I remember once, when there was a vacancy in a responsible and delicate office, suggesting to him the name of an intimate friend of his, whom I knew it would be personally most agreeable to him to promote. " No, no," he said, " that wouldn't do ; X is *maximus in minimis*, but *minimus in maximis*."

## THE RECONSTRUCTED GOVERNMENT

seeking that I am where I am. . . . An old friend of mine, Wilfrid Lawson, was accustomed to say: The man who walks on a straight road never loses his way. Well, I flatter myself that I have walked on a pretty straight road, probably because it was easier, and accordingly I have not gone astray. I trust that that will be continued to the last, which cannot be long deferred now.' "

He lay, disabled from taking any part in the active work of Government, from the middle of February, 1908, to April 6, when his resignation, which both the King and his colleagues had done all in their power to prevent, was announced to the world.<sup>1</sup> During this protracted interregnum the political atmosphere was charged with speculation and gossip. In the middle of it (March 12) Mr. Morley records that he wrote as follows :

" Apart from the sore regret of every one of us at the disappearance of so gallant, honest and experienced a Chief of our Party, with his extraordinary command of the majority in the House of Commons, more than one question of a rather delicate kind will fall to be settled. Not as to the succession to his immediate post. That has been tolerably decisively settled by circumstances. But of course the disappearance of the Prime Minister shifts the centre of gravity. As a Cabinet, we have been the most absolutely harmonious and amicable that ever was known, and I see no reason why the same frame of mind should not remain, for our future Parliamentary safety and for the advantage of the country. Only there will have to be a little readjustment of one or two offices: first, to keep the balance between the two wings of the Cabinet, the Liberal Leaguers on the one

<sup>1</sup> He died April 22.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

hand and the pro-Boers, for instance, on the other ;<sup>1</sup> second, to meet one or two strong, and indeed almost indefeasible, claims."<sup>2</sup>

On April 8 I was summoned by the King, who was at Biarritz, to form a new Administration, and I at once proceeded thither to kiss hands. I suggested various changes in the distribution of offices, which, after full discussion, were all approved by the King. The most important of them were the appointment of Mr. Lloyd George to the Exchequer ; the supersession of Lord Elgin by Lord Crewe at the Colonial Office, and of Lord Tweedmouth by Mr. McKenna at the Admiralty ; and the admission to the Cabinet of Mr. Churchill as President of the Board of Trade, and of Mr. Runciman as President of the Board of Education.

Outside the Cabinet, Colonel Seely joined the Government as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and Mr. Masterman as Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board, and Dr. Macnamara was promoted to be Secretary to the Admiralty.

To the world at large, undoubtedly the most interesting feature in the new arrangements was the grant of a Viscounty to Mr. John Morley, who continued to hold the India Office. How this came about is best told in his own words :

" It was on one afternoon at this time<sup>3</sup> that Asquith came to my official room at the House of Commons, and told me that he understood the King,

<sup>1</sup> By way of illustrating what Morley probably had in his mind, there is a letter (published in the " Life of Lord Ripon," Vol. II, p. 303) written some months later (October, 1908) to Lord Ripon, on his retirement, by Lord Loreburn, the Lord Chancellor : " C.-B. and Bryce and you were on the formation of the Government the men I most agreed with and relied upon. It is a very different Government to-day from what it was three years ago. But I will not dwell on these things, and will hope for the best, and recall how much there still is in the Cabinet that inspires hope."

<sup>2</sup> " Recollections," II, pp. 248-9.

<sup>3</sup> I.e., early in April.



*Photo: Downey*

VISCOUNT MORLEY





## THE RECONSTRUCTED GOVERNMENT

then at Biarritz, would send for him to kiss hands as the new Head of the Government. 'Yes, of course,' I said, 'there could be no thought of anything else, that is quite certain.' He hoped that I should remain with him, and would like to know if I had any views for myself. 'I suppose,' I said, 'that I have a claim from seniority of service for your place at the Exchequer, but I don't know that I have any special aptitude for it under present prospects; and I am engaged in an extremely important and interesting piece of work. As you know, my heart is much in it, and I should be sorry to break off. So, if you approve, I will stay at the India Office, and go to the House of Lords.' 'Why on earth should you go there?' 'Because, though my eye is not dim, nor my natural force abated, I have had a pretty industrious life, and I shall do my work all the better for the comparative leisure of the other place.' He made no sort of difficulty; so, after cordial words of thanks from him and good wishes from me, we parted."<sup>1</sup>

To the Viceroy, Lord Minto, he writes a little later (April 15):

"By this time you will probably know that I have taken the plunge and gone to the other House. My inclination, almost to the last, was to bolt from public life altogether, for I have a decent library of books still unread, and in my brain a page or two still unwritten. Before the present Government comes to an end, the hand of time will in any case have brought the zest for either reading or writing down near to zero, or beyond. I suppose, however, one should do the business that lies to one's hand."<sup>2</sup>

Some months later, when he had settled down to

<sup>1</sup> "Recollections," II, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> "Lord Minto," by John Buchan, p. 252.

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his new status, he writes, in a mood of passing discontent, to the same correspondent<sup>1</sup> expressing his regret that he did not remain in the House of Commons to deal as "chief goose-herd" with what he described as "the honest Liberal fools and the baser sort of Unionist ditto." "An Under-Secretary cannot put the fear of God into their silly hearts, as the Secretary of State can at least try to do. However, I am up aloft, and there I am happy to stop; at the same time I have told Asquith that there is to be no playing with India to please the geese."<sup>2</sup>

Sir Henry Fowler was at the same time raised to the Peerage as Viscount Wolverhampton; he took his seat in the Upper House the same day as John Morley, and later on in the year became President of the Council. King Edward, who shared Queen Victoria's personal regard for Fowler, while assenting to his appointment to this dignified post, wrote to me expressing deep regret at losing his services in the Chancellorship of the Duchy. He was now nearing his eightieth year, and his days of active political work were over. He was in many ways a remarkable man, and his speech on the Indian Cotton Duties (February, 1895) was a Parliamentary achievement of a very high order. With his rugged granitic face, his organ-like voice, and his air of moral authority, he seemed to have been cut out by Nature for a leader of men.<sup>3</sup> A certain constitutional timidity, perhaps due to physical causes, stood in his way. I was much attached to him, as I believe he was to me.

<sup>1</sup> "Lord Minto," by John Buchan, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> A perhaps superfluous caution.

<sup>3</sup> "Father always let us have his own way," says his gifted daughter in her admirable "Life of Lord Wolverhampton."

## CHAPTER X

### ARMY AND FINANCE, 1905-1908

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**T**O gather up what remains to be told of the story of the Campbell-Bannerman Government—omitting, for reasons which I have given in the Preface, what it did and attempted in the domain of Foreign affairs—I must pass in brief review its military and financial record.

The most striking, and in its international consequences one of the most momentous, of its administrative achievements was the reconstruction of the Army, begun in these years, and subsequently developed and completed, by Mr. Haldane. His first object was to provide—what had been so lamentably lacking on the outbreak of the Boer War—a professional Army, limited in numbers, but so organized as to be a mobile Striking force, ready in all its branches for any emergency overseas, and backed and supplemented by adequate Reserves. Next, he aimed at bringing into existence a Second Line—which came to be known as the Territorial Army—formed on a County basis, whose function it would be to prevent or repel raids, to garrison fortresses, and to be capable, if the need arose, not as a matter of compulsion, but of voluntary choice, of serving abroad.

The first step was taken in 1906, when the so-called “Expeditionary Force” of 150,000 men began to be organized, to consist of six Infantry Divisions, one Cavalry Division, and all the necessary complements in Engineers, Artillery, Transport, Army

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Service, Medical, and other auxiliaries, for action overseas.

As regards stores, again, it is well known that during the South African War the Cabinet had laid down definite scales of war reserves ("Mowatt Reserves"), and required two military members of the Army Council to give annually to Parliament a formal certificate that these reserves were maintained intact. As new units took their place in the Expeditionary Force during the period of its organization, the application to them of the authorized scales of reserves naturally increased the total mass of stores so held.

The general result is thus summarized by Sir Charles Harris, who was in these years at the head of the Financial side of the War Office:

"In fact, the Estimates and Establishments of the Army for the whole period 1906-14 exhibit, for the first time in our history, a coherent work of real organization for war, by which the traditional and fortuitous establishments of the several arms were replaced by proportions scientifically calculated to produce, from the men and money available, the 6 divisions and 1 cavalry division of the Old Contemptibles. By these changes the Expeditionary Force of 25,000 men, which we had before the South African War, was increased to 160,000 Regulars, with 14 organized Divisions of Territorials in Second Line."

Without going into technical details, the actual working of the new plan can be succinctly stated in the words of the same authority, whose impartiality and competence are beyond dispute, in a communication to *The Times* (after the death of Lord Ypres) in May, 1925. Sir Charles Harris writes as follows:

"After the 'Esher' reorganization of the War Office, the preparation of Army Estimates was put

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on a basis enabling responsibility for the allocation of funds, within the total, to be definitely assigned. The relative priority of different forms of expenditure was determined by the members of the Army Council (other than the Secretary of State) sitting as a formal Estimate Committee with the C.I.G.S. in the chair, and the Estimates so prepared were presented to Parliament over the signature of all the members of Council. They show that the actual regimental establishments of the Regulars in 1908 totalled 177,366 officers and men, and in 1914, 177,271, the main difference in details being that in the latter year room had been found within the total for a Flying Corps of 1,005. As regards money, while the expenditure on Territorial Forces rose from £2,243,000 in 1908-9 to £3,086,000 (estimated) in 1914-15, the total expenditure on the Army rose from £26,859,000 to £28,845,000 (estimated), the latter figure including £1,000,000 for aviation ; so that the whole provision for that new service and the increase for the Territorials were found without taking a penny from the rest of the Army."

In Finance, without going into the details of the Budgets of 1906 and 1907, I may summarize their general result by a quotation from a speech which I made at Ladybank on October 19, 1907 :

"The Government have substantially reduced the cost of the Army and Navy ; they have put an end to the profligate practice of borrowing money for Military and Naval works ; they have made the largest reduction ever made during two years in the National Debt ; they have abolished the Coal duties ; they have lowered the Tea duty ; they have removed the greatest and most genuine grievance of the Income-tax payer by establishing discrimination between incomes which are the

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result of permanent investments and incomes which are earned." (This distinction, made in 1907, had as its immediate effect that, with an income-tax at 1s., only 9d. was to be charged on earned income.)

By the Budget of 1908 Old Age Pensions on a non-contributory basis, and financed not out of Local but wholly out of Central funds, were at last definitely made part of the financial obligations of the country; while the cost of the necessities of life was further lightened by the reduction of the Sugar duty, and unprecedented provision was made for the redemption of Debt.

Owing to my having only a few weeks before relinquished the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Budget of 1908 was presented by me. Mr. Lloyd George, the new Chancellor, took charge of the subsequent stages, authorizing and setting out the terms and conditions of the Old Age Pensions Scheme.

An Amendment to the Second Reading of the Bill was proposed in the following terms :

"While it is desirable that the State should organize aid for the unfortunate by establishing and assisting a general system of insurance against the principal risks of life, it is unjust to spend taxpayers' money in giving subsidies to persons selected by arbitrary standards of age, income, and character."

It was moved by Mr. Harold Cox (an Independent Liberal) and seconded by Lord Robert Cecil.

The Amendment was rejected by 417 to 29.

## CHAPTER XI

### LICENSING : GOSCHEN : HARTINGTON

THE first Session (1908) of the reconstructed Government developed a new phase in the controversy between the two Houses.

A large part of the time of the House of Commons was given to the Licensing Bill, for which I made myself personally responsible, with the invaluable aid in the Committee Stage of two of my younger colleagues, both of whom had before them brilliant careers—Mr. Herbert Samuel, then Under-Secretary at the Home Office, and Sir Samuel Evans, the Solicitor-General. The object of the Bill was to secure the compulsory reduction of the number of public-houses according to a fixed ratio of population. Compensation for extinguished licences was to be provided by a levy on the Trade. And there was to be a time limit for the termination of all vested interests. The Bill was denounced as nugatory for its avowed purpose—the promotion of temperance<sup>1</sup>—and confiscatory in its operation.

The rejection of the Bill was moved by Mr. Cave (since Lord Chancellor), and the Second Reading was carried by a majority of about 250. The Committee stage lasted part of the summer and most of the autumn; some not inconsiderable concessions were made in the course of it; but the main lines of the

<sup>1</sup> In illustration of the argument that the number of public-houses had little or nothing to do with the amount of drunkenness, Lord Salisbury was reported to have made the whimsical comment that he did not feel any more inclined to sleepiness at Hatfield, where there were (say) fifty bedrooms, than at a seaside villa where there were a dozen.



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Bill were not substantially changed; and it ultimately left the House of Commons on the Third Reading with a majority of 237.

Its doom, however, was at once sealed at a private meeting of Unionist Peers at Lansdowne House. A three days' debate on the Second Reading was allowed in the House of Lords, and on November 27 the Bill was summarily rejected without further examination by a majority of 272 to 96. As Lord Fitzmaurice said, the House gave it a "first-class funeral. A great number of noble lords have arrived who have not often honoured us with their presence."

It is not necessary to comment further on this proceeding than to say that, while in the opinion of many, of whom I am one, it put back the cause of Temperance Reform in England for the best part of the lifetime of a generation, it undoubtedly did much to accelerate and embitter the inevitable Constitutional crisis.

Before I come to deal with the Budget of 1909 and its consequences, I must pause for a moment to dwell upon two great personal losses which in the years 1907-8, though they fell with direct and exceptional severity upon the Unionist Party, sensibly impoverished the resources of our public life.

Lord Goschen died in February, 1907, and the Duke of Devonshire in March, 1908.

I have already, in earlier Chapters of this book, endeavoured from time to time to bring into relief the conspicuous and distinctive parts which were played at critical moments by each of these eminent men.

They came from different social strata; their upbringing, and the environment in which each of them was trained for public service, was as diverse as were

## GOSCHEN : HARTINGTON

the men themselves, not only in intellectual equipment, but in temperament and character.

Goschen was of German origin. His grandfather was a famous publisher at Leipzig, and the intimate friend of Goethe and Schiller. His father had early in the Nineteenth Century migrated to London and founded in the City a great financial business. His own early school years were spent in Germany. At the age of fourteen he was sent to Rugby, where he soon came to the front, and rose in time to the head of the school. He went on to Oxford, where he had a distinguished academic record; and none of his subsequent honours gave him so much pleasure as his election, with general acclamation, on the death of Lord Salisbury in 1903, to the Chancellorship of his old University. He had hardly more than begun his business career when, at the age of twenty-seven, he was made a Director of the Bank of England; five years later he was elected one of the Liberal Members for the City; and, after only three years' service in the House of Commons, he was admitted, on the same day as Lord Hartington, to Lord Russell's Cabinet (January, 1866). He was still only thirty-five, and was—his biographer, Mr. Arthur Elliot, tells us—known in the City as the "Fortunate Youth." Nor, judged by the ordinary tests, did he ever fall out of favour with Fortune.

He became, in his time, a prominent member of Liberal, of Conservative, and of Unionist Cabinets, and during the brief interval in his career when, by his disinterested opposition to the extension of the County franchise, he had disabled himself from holding political office in Mr. Gladstone's Government of 1880, he was sent by his old Chief on a special mission as Ambassador to the Sultan, and was offered the Vice-

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royalty of India, and the Speakership of the House of Commons.

I have already spoken of his prowess as a Parliamentary Debater. As a Statesman he will be remembered not so much for any constructive achievement as for the distinguished and formidable part which he took in two defensive campaigns: the first against Gladstone's Home Rule, in 1886; the second against Chamberlain's Fiscal Policy, in 1903-5. Though not an orator of the first rank, he was a most expert dialectician, and a master of effective epigram. Some of the phrases which he coined enjoyed a wide currency in their day: "I am not going to give a blank cheque to Lord Salisbury"; "We must be ready to make our wills and do our duty"; "I will be no party to a gamble with the food of the people."

He was a man of broad culture, a devotee of the humanities, an indefatigable worker in the cause of higher education; a fighter who gave no quarter within the rules of the game; and withal one of the best of companions and most loyal of friends.

The eighth Duke of Devonshire, who will be better known in history as Lord Hartington, belonged by birth to one of the ruling English families. Unlike Goschen, he had nothing but the bluest blood in his veins. He was by nature of a manly but lethargic, pleasure-seeking, temperament; with none of the tastes and interests of a student or a connoisseur; and with what often seemed a slow-moving and even heavy-gaited mind. That he turned his main activities into the channel of politics was almost an accident, and was certainly not due to the promptings of personal ambition. Nor had he any natural gifts of speech, though, both in Parliament and on the platform, he came to rival in cogency and impressiveness the most



*Photo: Dickinson*

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE.



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brilliant orators of his time. He was perhaps the best illustration in our recent history of the power of Personality.

Among the tributes which were paid to his memory in the House of Commons on his death, none was more felicitous than that of Mr. Balfour. He said that, of all the great statesmen he had known, the Duke was the most persuasive speaker : " because he never attempted to conceal the strength of the case against him " ; and " brought before the public, in absolutely transparent and unmistakable terms, the very arguments he had been going through patiently and honestly, before he arrived at his conclusion." I was able on the same occasion to say, with perfect sincerity, that " in the closing years of his life he commanded in a greater degree than perhaps any other public man the respect and confidence of men of every shade of opinion." And by what title ? " By simplicity of nature, directness of purpose, intuitive insight into practical conditions, inflexible courage, and, above all, tranquil indifference to praise and blame, and absolute disinterestedness."

In the political welter which was rapidly working up, England sorely missed these two great figures.



■

*PART IV*

■





## CHAPTER I

### THE BUDGET OF 1909 (I)

**B**Y the Budget of 1909, the quarrel between the two Houses, of which the successive stages have been already described, was brought to a head.

A large prospective deficit had to be made good, arising partly from the growing needs of Naval Defence, and still more from the demands of a costly programme of Social Reform, of which the scheme for Old Age Pensions was the first instalment; to be followed by provision for invalidity and unemployment Insurance, and by Development grants for roads, afforestation, and other national services.

Mr. Lloyd George proposed to find the means for meeting these necessities of the present and the near future in the following ways :

(1) By reducing the annual provision for the Debt from £28,000,000 to £25,000,000. Some such step had been foreshadowed in my Budget speech of the previous year; and as the real reduction of the dead-weight debt in the financial year 1908-9 had amounted to no less than £15½ millions, and of the £25 millions to be still applied to debt purposes about £7 millions would be devoted to repayment of principal, there could be no serious question that this part of the new Budget was consistent with all the canons of sound finance.

(2) By increasing the Income Tax on a graduated scale from 9d. to 1s. 2d., and imposing a Super Tax

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(in the case of the larger incomes) on their excess over £3,000 per annum. This latter proposal was in accordance with the recommendations of a strong House of Commons Committee presided over by Sir C. Dilke in 1906.

(3) By a substantial addition to the Death Duties.

(4) By an increase in the duties on spirits, tobacco and liquor licences, and new taxes on petrol and motor-cars.

(5) By a set of four new Land Taxes, which would admittedly be relatively unproductive for the present, but which were defended as just in themselves and of progressive financial value. Of the four, the most important, and as it turned out the most controversial, were the tax on the Site Value of undeveloped land, and the Increment Duty on enhancements of Site Values.

For the purpose of assessing these new taxes, there was to be a general valuation of land.

It is not easy at this distance of time, and in the light of our later financial experiences, to realize the passionate resentment and the obstinate resistance which these proposals aroused. In a sense, as Mr. Lloyd George said in his opening speech, it was a "War Budget"; for one of its main objects was "to raise money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalor." But, given that the money had to be raised, unless both National Defence and Social Reform were to be crippled and starved, it is difficult to see in the means actually proposed, any adequate ground for the outcry with which the country resounded for the best part of two years against Spoliation, Socialism and breaches of the Decalogue. Apart from the land taxes, though it might be argued that a disproportionate share of the new expenditure

## THE BUDGET OF 1909

was thrown upon the direct as compared with the indirect taxpayer, there was nothing that, in principle, could not be abundantly justified by financial precedent.

It was the Land Taxes, and perhaps still more the proposed valuation of land, which "set the heather on fire." Their immediate yield was estimated to be very small, but the alarmists saw in them a potential instrument for almost unlimited confiscation. Being supposed myself to be a financier of a respectable and more or less conservative type, I was, in the course of the debates, frequently challenged by Mr. Balfour and others to defend the new imposts, and especially the Undeveloped Land and the Increment Duties. I have undertaken in my time many more intractable dialectical tasks, and though I was fully alive to the mechanical difficulties involved, and perhaps not so sanguine as some of my colleagues as to the progressive productiveness of the taxes, I had never any doubt as to their equity in principle. The Increment Duty, in particular, applied only to the enhancement in the value of land which is not due to any enterprise or expenditure on the part of the owner, but to the growth, and often to the actual expenditure, of the community. "Upon that added value" (I argued) "it is consistent with natural justice, with economic principle, and with sound policy, that the State should from time to time levy toll."

Whatever judgment a dispassionate observer may now pronounce upon the merits of the case, there can be no doubt as to the genuineness of the alarm which the Budget excited, or of the enthusiasm with which it was greeted and defended by the bulk of the Liberal Party.

After 3 weeks of preliminary discussion, and

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nearly 4 nights' debate on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill, in the Division, June 10, 1909 (though the Irish Nationalists, from hostility to the Whisky Duty, voted with the Conservatives), the Government had a majority of 366 to 209. The Bill was in Committee for forty-two Parliamentary days, and finally passed the House of Commons on November 4 by 379 to 149.

I will quote a passage from my final speech on the Third Reading as expressing the views which were held at the time by a large majority of the House of Commons :

“ What, then, are the two ways, and the only two ways before the country of meeting the necessities of the nation ? On the one hand you may do as we are doing. You may impose, simultaneously and in fair proportion, taxes on accumulated wealth, on the profits of industry, on the simpler luxuries, though not the necessities, of the poor. You may seek, as we are seeking, for new taxes on those forms of value which at present are either inadequately taxed or not taxed at all ; values which spring from monopoly ; which are not the fruit of individual effort or enterprise ; but which are the creation, either of social growth, or of the direct activity, of the State itself.

“ That is one way—that is the way proposed by this Budget. What is the other, the only other, that has yet been disclosed or even foreshadowed to Parliament and the country ? It is to take a toll on the prime necessities of life ; it is to raise the level of prices to the average consumer of commodities ; it is to surround your markets with a Tariff wall which, in so far as it succeeds in protecting the home producer, will fail to bring in revenue, and in so far

## *THE BUDGET OF 1909*

as it succeeds in bringing in revenue, will fail to protect the home producer.

“That, Sir, is the choice which has to be made, and if to these alternatives there is to be added another which I decline to believe, the choice between the maintenance and the abandonment by this House of its ancient constitutional supremacy over all matters of national finance, I say there is not a man who sits here beside or behind me to-night who is not ready to join issue.”

## CHAPTER II

### THE BUDGET OF 1909 (II)

ALL this time there had been a seething agitation in the country outside, organized and fomented on the one side by the "Budget League," and on the other by the "Budget Protest League." Mr. Lloyd George himself made a famous speech, which added a new term to the political vocabulary, at Limehouse. The principal organ in the Unionist Press accused him of "coarse personalities" and "pitiful claptrap." Critics with a tincture of classical reading denounced him as a second Cleon.<sup>1</sup> "We know now," wrote Sir Edward Carson,<sup>2</sup> "from Mr. Lloyd George that the Budget means the beginning of the end of all rights of property." Even Lord Lansdowne (Bowood, August 7) compared him to the "swooping robber gull, particularly voracious and unscrupulous, which steals fish from other gulls."

Lord Rosebery had, ever since the formation of the Campbell-Bannerman Government, maintained, on the whole, an attitude of not unsympathetic detachment. It is true that in an address to the Liberal League (March, 1907) he had said that his speeches might be regarded as "the croakings of a retired raven on a withered branch." He had, however, given valuable support in 1908 to the Licensing Bill, of which he approved the fundamental principles.

<sup>1</sup> A felicitous and untranslatable Greek epigram—attributed to Dr. Warre, the Provost of Eton—ran as follows :

ἐν ταῖς Ἀχαρναῖς δημαγωγικὸν τέρας·  
τοὺς γῆν ἔχοντας Λοιδορεῖ Γεωργὸς ἄν.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, Aug. 2, 1909.

## THE BUDGET OF 1909

But he fell upon the Budget of 1909, and rent it tooth and nail. He resigned the Presidency of the Liberal League, and speaking at Glasgow (September 10, 1909) he said :

“ I think my friends are moving on the path that leads to Socialism. How far they are advanced on that path I will not say. But on that path I, at any rate, cannot follow them an inch. Any form of Protection is an evil, but Socialism is the end of all—the negation of Faith, of Family, of Property, of Monarchy, of Empire.”

The phrase, “ The end of all,” became current coin in the controversy.

While the Bill was still in the House of Commons, rumours began to be rife as to its probable fate in the Upper House. So persistent did they become that, speaking at Birmingham on September 17, 1909, I thought it right to use the plainest language :

“ Amendment by the House of Lords is out of the question. Rejection by the House of Lords is equally out of the question. . . . Is this issue going to be raised? If it is, it carries with it in its train consequences which he would be a bold man to forecast or foresee. That way Revolution lies.”

Early in October I was summoned by King Edward to Balmoral, and after some conversation on the situation I left with him a confidential memorandum. His Majesty was naturally as anxious as were King William IV in the case of the Reform Bill, and Queen Victoria in the cases of the Irish Church and the Franchise Bills, to discover some *via media* by which a collision between the two Houses could be averted. He asked me whether I thought he was well within constitutional lines in holding communications with the Opposition leaders at this juncture. I replied



that I thought what he was proposing to do perfectly correct from a constitutional point of view.

Accordingly, on his return to London he gave an interview (October 12, 1909) at Buckingham Palace to Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Balfour. I saw him immediately afterwards, and gathered that the substance of what they had told him was that they had not yet decided what action the House of Lords should be advised to take.

Meanwhile, as I wrote at the time to my colleagues : "The prospect of the rejection of the Finance Bill by the Lords is regarded with serious apprehension by many who are in no sense partisans, and some of the wisest heads in the country are seeking, so far unavailingly, to avert such a grave and far-reaching innovation."

There can, however, be no doubt that the attitude of the great bulk of the Conservative Party was accurately foreshadowed in a speech made by Lord Milner at Glasgow on November 26. He declared that it was the duty of those who condemned the Budget not to let it pass, and so produce a great Unionist reaction (as some people recommended), but "to try to prevent a thing they believed bad, and to *damn the consequences*": another picturesque contribution to the phraseology of the times, which was not readily forgotten.

It was in this sense that the Opposition Leaders ultimately decided to advise the House of Lords to act, and on November 16 Lord Lansdowne gave notice that he would move as an amendment to the Second Reading—

"That this House is not justified in giving its consent to this Bill until it has been submitted to the judgment of the country."

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The momentous debate, lasting for six days, which followed, ranged over the whole field of the relations between the two Houses.

The main contention of Lord Lansdowne and his thick-and-thin supporters was, that the House of Lords was entitled, in the case of a measure to which the majority of its members saw so many objections, to decline to pass it until it had been submitted to a referendum in the shape of a General Election. But, among the most hostile critics of the Budget, voices of great authority were raised in deprecation of, and protest against, the course proposed. Lord James of Hereford declared it to be beyond the Constitutional competence of the House to reject the Bill. Lord Balfour of Burleigh said: "In many respects the Finance Bill is not just. . . . Nevertheless I do not agree as to the wisdom of stopping it in the way and by the method which is proposed." Lord Cromer had "come to the conclusion that, objectionable as the Budget was, the House of Lords could not reject it without incurring other and more formidable risks." And most significant of all were the words of Lord Rosebery: "I cannot, I think, be more hostile to the Budget than I am. But I am not willing to link the fortunes of the Second Chamber with opposition to the Budget. . . . I think you are playing for too heavy a stake on this occasion. I think you are risking, in your opposition to what I agree with you is an iniquitous and dangerous measure, the very existence of a Second Chamber."

The Ministers in charge of the Bill were not content with denying the Constitutional competence of the House of Lords to tamper with the finance of the year; to them the rejection of the Budget was only

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the latest in a series of systematic attacks by the Second Chamber upon the principle of representative government. The Lord Chancellor (Loreburn) read out from a paper the following declaration: "It is impossible that any Liberal Government should ever again bear the heavy burden of office, unless it is secured against a repetition of treatment such as our measures have had to undergo for the last four years." And Lord Crewe, the Leader of the House, wound up the debate with the intimation that, after the action which their Lordships were taking, "we must set ourselves to obtain guarantees, fenced about and guarded by the force of statute, which will prevent that indiscriminate destruction of our legislation of which your work to-night is the climax and the crown."

The House, however, turned a deaf ear to these warning voices, and determined to "damn the consequences." The Second Reading was defeated by 350 to 75. As the *Journal* dryly records: "Resolved in the Negative accordingly."

## CHAPTER III

DISSOLUTION AND GENERAL ELECTION OF JANUARY,  
1910

THE Government took up the challenge, so rashly thrown down, without a day's delay. On December 2nd, 1909, I proposed in the House of Commons a motion in the following terms :

“ That the action of the House of Lords in refusing to pass into law the financial provision made by this House for the service of the year is a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of the rights of the Commons.”

In submitting the motion I announced that I had advised the Crown to dissolve Parliament at the earliest possible moment, and that His Majesty had been graciously pleased to accept that advice. I went on to say : “ No one will deny that the House of Lords has a technical right to reject a Finance Bill or any other Bill. I certainly am not in the least concerned to deny that there have been cases in the old days in which this House has acquiesced, though rarely without protest, not only in the rejection but in the amendment of Bills which were concerned with the taxation of the country. For the most part these cases were trivial, and even trumpery, in their character ; but ever since 1628, when, by the advice of the greatest lawyers of that day, the mention of the Lords was deliberately omitted from the granting words in the preamble of Supply Bills, this House has asserted, with ever-growing emphasis, its own

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exclusive right to determine the taxation and the expenditure of the country.

“ Within the practice of our own time there is one case, and one only, in which the House of Lords has ever attempted to interfere with the financial functions of this House. That is the familiar case of the Paper Duty in 1860, when, the House of Commons having sanctioned the repeal of the tax, the House of Lords refused to give its assent to the repeal. The Commons took swift and summary vengeance. In the following year they passed the same tax, in company with a number of others, as part of the general financial arrangements of the year. The House of Lords acquiesced, and from that day to this it has never attempted again to question the sole and exclusive competence of this House in matters of Supply. . . .

“ The House of Lords, or their apologists, tell us that they have not rejected this Bill. All they have done is to refer it to the people. . . . This new-fangled Cæsarism, which converts the House of Lords into a kind of plebiscitary organ, is one of the quaintest inventions of our time. . . . The truth is that all this talk about the duty or the right of the House of Lords to refer measures to the people is, in the light of our practical and actual experience, the hollowest outcry of political cant. We never hear of it when a Tory Government is in power. It is simply a thin, rhetorical veneer, by which it is sought to gloss over the partisan, and in this case the unconstitutional, action of a purely partisan Chamber. The sum and substance of the matter is that the House of Lords rejected the Finance Bill, not because they love the people, but because they hate the Budget.”

Mr. Balfour, in reply, defended the Peers. They had done their duty and done it fearlessly. “ I under-

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stand," he said to the Government, "that you are going to try to persuade the people of this country that they are suffering some wrong, some terrible indignity, by having their opinion asked about the Budget." He imagined the Liberals would have a new banner for their popular processions, bearing the device: "The Lords have insulted you by asking your opinion. Take care to give such a vote that your opinion will never be asked again."

The motion was carried by 349 to 134: majority, 215.

Parliament was at once dissolved.

I laid down in a Memorandum which I circulated to my colleagues the issue, as I conceived it, which we should submit to the electorate:

The first duty of a Liberal Government must be to secure such a readjustment of the relations and powers of the two Houses that the will of the people, maturely interpreted and deliberately expressed by their chosen representatives, should, whether the majority of the House of Commons were for the time being Liberal or Conservative, be carried into law. There was, I pointed out, no question of abolishing the Second Chamber. In a democratic country such a Chamber is needed, and has useful and dignified functions to discharge. But in future it must be rendered impossible for a partisan and non-representative body to be able at its discretion to compel the Government of the day, possessing the confidence of the House of Commons, to abandon or mutilate its legislation, and even its finance; or else, whenever and as often as the House of Lords thinks fit, to put the country to the expense and turmoil of a General Election.

To make the position abundantly clear, in opening the electoral campaign at the Albert Hall, on

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December 10, I used words which were much quoted and canvassed during the next eighteen months :

“ We shall not assume office, and we shall not hold office, unless we can secure the safeguards which experience shows us to be necessary for the legislative utility and honour of the party of progress.”

The result of the Election of January, 1910, was as follows :—

Liberals .. .. .	275
Conservatives and Unionists (including twenty Irish) .. ..	273
Irish Nationalists (twelve Independent) .. .. .	82
Labour .. .. .	40
	<hr/>
	670

The following commentary on these figures is drawn in substance from a contemporary Cabinet Memorandum :

If the Independent Nationalists, who were an uncertain factor, were left out of the account, this would give a majority against the maintenance of the Lords' veto of about 112 (385 against 273). If Ireland as a whole was left entirely out of the account, the majority against the Lords' veto in Great Britain would work out at 62 (315 against 253).

The majority differed from that which the Government could command in the previous House of Commons in two respects: viz. (1) in being materially smaller in its proportions, and (2) in being of a composite, and not of a homogeneous, character. But, in actual size, it compared favourably with the majorities which such statesmen as Lords John Russell and Palmerston considered adequate; and

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upon the Constitutional issue there was every reason to believe (as the event proved) that it was substantially united.

In these circumstances the Government, after carefully reviewing the situation created by the General Election, and in view of the obvious inability of the Conservative leaders to conduct the affairs of the nation in a House of Commons so constituted, came to the conclusion that it was their duty to continue to carry on the Administration, and at the earliest moment compatible with the financial exigencies of the country, to submit to Parliament their proposals in regard to the future relations between the two Houses.

Meetings of the Cabinet were held on February 10 and 11, 1910, and on the 12th I went to Brighton, where the King then was, and communicated to him a Cabinet Minute of the 11th. As its substance was publicly stated in Parliament very shortly afterwards, there can be no objection to recording its precise terms, which had been the subject of careful consideration :

“ His Majesty’s Ministers do not propose to advise or request any exercise of the Royal Prerogative in existing circumstances, or until they have submitted their plans to Parliament. If, in their judgment, it should become their duty to tender any such advice, they would do so when—and not before—the actual necessity may arise.”

I intimated at the same time to His Majesty that the Cabinet had decided to make the reintroduction of the Budget, and the necessary provisions for the finance of the year, the first item in their programme. In the course of a further communication, a day or two later, I pointed out that if (as seemed probable)



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the Opposition should find themselves compelled by their electoral pledges to vote against the Budget, it was by no means certain that, when it came to the point, they would find that in this course they had the support of the Irish Party. But, I added, such a combination was undoubtedly a contingency which must be regarded as within the range of probability.

(It must be remembered that the Nationalists had not supported either the Second or the Third Reading of the Finance Bill of 1909.)

A good deal of steering was needed to round this rather hazardous point. In the end the Finance Bill of the previous year after occupying three days was read a third time in the House of Commons on April 27 by a majority of 93, and went through all the stages next day in the House of Lords.

In the meantime the main issue became more and more clearly isolated and defined. In the Speech from the Throne (February 21) the King was advised to say: "Proposals will be laid before you, with all convenient speed, to define the relations between the Houses of Parliament, so as to secure the undivided authority of the House of Commons over finance, and its predominance in legislation. These measures, in the opinion of my advisers, should provide that this House (the House of Lords) should be so constituted and empowered as to exercise impartially, in regard to proposed legislation, the functions of initiation, revision, and, subject to proper safeguards, of delay."

In view of my language (already quoted) at the Albert Hall, it was assumed in some quarters that the Government had already secured some kind of guarantee for the contingent exercise of the Royal Prerogative. The Cabinet Minute of February 11 shows that this was not the case.

## *GENERAL ELECTION OF JANUARY, 1910*

Accordingly, on the first day of the debate on the Address, I said: "I tell the House quite frankly that I have received no such guarantee, and that I have asked for no such guarantee. In my judgment it is the duty of responsible politicians in this country, as long as possible and as far as possible, to keep the name of the Sovereign and the prerogatives of the Crown outside the domain of party politics. If the occasion should arise, I should not hesitate to tender such advice to the Crown as in the circumstances the exigencies of the situation appeared to warrant in the public interest. But to ask, in advance, for a blank authority, for an indefinite exercise of the Royal Prerogative, in regard to a measure which has never been submitted to, or approved by, the House of Commons, is a request which, in my judgment, no constitutional statesman can properly make, and it is a concession which the Sovereign cannot be expected to grant."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE VETO—FIRST STAGE

#### KING EDWARD'S DEATH

THE proposals of the Government were, in the first instance, embodied in three resolutions which were debated during the first fortnight of April, 1910, and carried by majorities of from 105 to 98. Their object was to declare the necessity for legislation :

(1) To disable the House of Lords from rejecting or amending Money Bills ;

(2) To provide that any Bill which had passed the House of Commons and been rejected by the Lords in three successive Sessions should become law, provided (a) that the Bill was sent up from the Commons at least one month before the end of each Session, and (b) that at least two years should have elapsed between the first introduction of the Bill and its being passed by the House of Commons for the third time ;

(3) To limit the duration of Parliament to five years.

The scheme was put forward as a practical remedy for the evils and injustices which the experience of the last four years had shown to be inherent in the existing system. The Government not only admitted but asserted that the reconstruction of the Second Chamber, on a popular basis and in diminished numbers, was a problem which must be dealt with in the near future. But its solution would be in all prob-

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ability a long and troublesome process, and what the country needed was an immediate outlet from an intolerable situation. The House of Lords was indeed itself engaged in declaring the need for its own reconstitution. At Lord Rosebery's instance, it proceeded to pass resolutions in that sense, of which the most specific, and perhaps the only one of practical significance, asserted, as "a necessary preliminary of reform," that "the possession of a Peerage should no longer of itself give the right to sit and vote in the House," an innocent-looking proposition, which would incidentally have made a clean sweep of the Prerogative of the Crown to add to the membership of the House of Lords by the creation of new Peers. It was the only one of Lord Rosebery's resolutions upon which the House of Lords divided, and it was carried in a relatively thin House by 175 against 17.

There was genuine apprehension in some sections of the Opposition that, after the veto of the Peers had been limited, the supporters of the Government might prevent them from proceeding with the reform of the Second Chamber. We might, in fact, be left at the mercy of "Single Chamber Government." This was not the view of Ministers, and one of them, Sir Edward Grey, went so far as to declare that to "confine ourselves to a Single Chamber issue, and leave the policy of reform of the House of Lords to the other side, would result for us politically in disaster, death and damnation."

To make the position plain, the Bill embodying the House of Commons resolutions had a declaratory Preamble: "That it is intended to substitute for the House of Lords as it at present exists a Second Chamber constituted on a popular basis, but such substitution cannot be immediately brought into operation."

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The Bill was introduced on April 14, and in language which had been carefully considered by the Cabinet, I made it clear that, this time, the labours of the Commons were not going to be thrown away :

“ If the Lords fail to accept our policy, or decline to consider it as it is formally presented to the House, we shall feel it our duty immediately to tender advice to the Crown as to the steps which will have to be taken if that policy is to receive statutory enactment in this Parliament. What the precise terms of that advice will be it will, of course, not be right for me to say now. But if we do not find ourselves in a position to ensure that statutory effect shall be given to that policy in this Parliament, we shall then either resign our offices or recommend the dissolution of Parliament.

“ Let me add this, that in no case will we recommend a dissolution except under such conditions as will secure that in the new Parliament the judgment of the people, as expressed at the elections, will be carried into law.”

After disposing of the Budget, the House of Commons adjourned for a spring recess, and I took advantage of the opportunity to accompany the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna, on the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress*, on a visit of inspection to Gibraltar. At King Edward's request, we put in at Lisbon to pay our respects to King Manoel of Portugal and the Queen-Mother. The last communication I had from my revered Sovereign was a telegram sent two days before his death : “ Very glad that you liked your stay at Lisbon and that the King was so pleasant. Edward R.”

We had passed Cadiz and were nearing Gibraltar, when the First Lord and I received by wireless our first intimation of the King's illness. Lord Knollys's

## KING EDWARD'S DEATH

message to me was of a disquieting kind : " Deeply regret to say the King's condition is now most critical." On our arrival a few hours later at Gibraltar I at once gave instructions for our immediate return, and on Friday, May 6, I telegraphed to Lord Knollys as follows :—

" Your telegram received. Am starting at once for home. I find that we can make journey quicker by sea than by land. In half an hour *Enchantress* will be under weigh for Plymouth, where I hope to be Monday night. Please convey my most fervent sympathy and hopes to Queen and Prince of Wales. We shall be in constant telegraph contact by wireless throughout. Please keep me constantly informed."

At three o'clock in the morning of the following day (May 7) I received by wireless the terrible news of the King's death : " I am deeply grieved to inform you that my beloved father the King passed away peacefully at a quarter to twelve to-night (the 6th). —GEORGE."

I went up on deck, and I remember well that the first sight that met my eyes in the twilight before dawn was Halley's Comet blazing in the sky. It was the only time I believe that any of us saw it during our voyage. I felt bewildered and indeed stunned. At a most anxious moment in the fortunes of the State, we had lost, without warning or preparation, the Sovereign whose ripe experience, trained sagacity, equitable judgment, and unvarying consideration, counted for so much. For two years I had been his Chief Minister, and I am thankful to remember that from first to last I never concealed anything from him. He soon got to know this, and in return he treated me with a gracious frankness which made our relationship in very trying and exacting times

## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

one, not always of complete agreement, but of unbroken confidence. It was this that lightened a load which I should otherwise have found almost intolerably oppressive: the prospect that, in the near future, I might find it my duty to give him advice which I knew would be in a high degree unpalatable.

Now he had gone. His successor, with all his fine and engaging qualities, was without political experience. We were nearing the verge of a crisis almost without example in our constitutional history. What was the right thing to do? This was the question which absorbed my thoughts as we made our way, with two fast escorting cruisers, through the Bay of Biscay, until we landed at Plymouth on the evening of Monday, May 9.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ELECTION OF DECEMBER, 1910

THE death of King Edward completely transformed the political situation. "The nation witnessed an incident unparalleled in the annals of party warfare. The two combatant forces, already in battle array, piled their arms, while the leaders on both sides retired for private conference."<sup>1</sup>

For the best part of six months an honest and continuous effort was made by leading representatives of both parties in the State to arrive at a settlement of the Constitutional question by agreement. The Government were represented by myself, Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Crewe, and Mr. Birrell; and the Unionist Party by Mr. Balfour, Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, and Lord Cawdor, who had been for a short term First Lord of the Admiralty in Mr. Balfour's Government. Much ground was covered, and many avenues and by-paths were explored.

The experiment unhappily broke down in the early part of November, and the Government then reverted to the situation as it stood in April.

After full consideration we came to the conclusion that it was our duty to advise another Dissolution of Parliament.

As less than a year had passed since the General Election of January, and as the Government still

<sup>1</sup> From my speech in the House of Commons of November 18.



## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

possessed the support of an adequate majority in the House of Commons, it would, under anything like normal conditions, have been difficult, if not impossible, to justify such advice. But the conditions were wholly abnormal.

The death of King Edward, and the well-intended but abortive parleyings between Party leaders which followed, had postponed the decision, but had in no way transformed the character, or relaxed the urgency, of the Constitutional issue. Since the electors, in January, had given us authority to proceed upon the lines of the Suspensory Veto, our plan had been definitely formulated in the shape of a Bill. It seemed to us to be only fair, both to the country and the Crown, that we should be fortified by a fresh verdict of the Electorate before we entered upon the final stage of the struggle, with the contingency, even the probability, that it might, in the last resort, be necessary to invoke the exercise of the Royal Prerogative to give effect to the popular will.

Accordingly (on November 15, 1910) we accompanied our advice to His Majesty with the following statement :

“ His Majesty’s Ministers cannot take the responsibility of advising a Dissolution unless they may understand that, in the event of the policy of the Government being approved by an adequate majority in the new House of Commons, His Majesty will be ready to exercise his Constitutional powers, which may involve the Prerogative of creating Peers, if needed, to secure that effect shall be given to the decision of the Country. His Majesty’s Ministers are fully alive to the importance of keeping the name of the King out of the sphere of Party and Electoral contro-

## *ELECTION OF DECEMBER, 1910*

versy. They take upon themselves, as is their duty, the entire and exclusive responsibility for the policy which they would place before the Electorate. His Majesty will doubtless agree that it would be inadvisable in the interests of the State that any communication of the intentions of the Crown should be made public unless and until the actual occasion should arise."

The King came to London on the 16th, and, after discussing the matter in all its bearings with Lord Crewe and myself, was pleased to inform me that he felt that he had no alternative but to assent to the advice of the Cabinet.

On November 18 I announced in the House of Commons that the King had accepted my advice to dissolve Parliament. In accordance with the concluding words of the Cabinet Memorandum to the King, I did not disclose the communications with His Majesty, or the assurance of the Crown with regard to the possible exercise of the Prerogative, until the following August,<sup>1</sup> when the fate of the Parliament Bill was finally in jeopardy. As I then said, I never used in public or in private, during the months which followed, the word "guarantee" or "pledge" in regard to the matter. They were words which seemed to be inappropriate to describe a conditional understanding such as this, which the Cabinet purposely left open until the contingency should actually arise.

Looking back after many years, I conceive that the course taken by the Government was in strict consonance both with Constitutional propriety and the public interest.

The Dissolution was deferred for ten days to give

<sup>1</sup> In a speech in the House of Commons, August 7, 1911.

## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

the House of Lords an opportunity of pronouncing on the Parliament Bill, and putting their alternative plan before the country. They had hurriedly adopted, on November 17, Lord Rosebery's proposals, complementary to his March resolutions, for the transformation of their ancient Chamber into a brand-new Senate.

The Second Reading of the Parliament Bill was moved by Lord Crewe on the 21st, but the debate was adjourned, at Lord Lansdowne's instance, so that the Peers might proceed with their own scheme for settling differences between the Commons and the House of Lords, "reconstituted and reduced in numbers." Provision was made for a joint sitting of members of the two Houses; but if the difference related to a matter which was of "great gravity" and had not been "adequately submitted to the judgment of the people," it was to be submitted to them by Referendum. This revolutionary measure was debated and adopted by the Peers in a couple of days.

I may cite some criticisms upon it which I made at the time in a speech at Hull (November 25): "Given a second Chamber, moderate in size, and constituted on popular lines, I would not brush aside procedure by Conference and Joint Session as a possible and even hopeful expedient for the avoidance of deadlocks. But under what condition is this Joint Session going to take place? In what relative proportions are the two Houses going to sit in it? Remember, the whole thing only comes into operation when you have a Liberal majority in the House of Commons. With a Tory majority there, the machinery falls into abeyance. The real question is this—it goes to the very root and foundation of the scheme—What kind and

## *ELECTION OF DECEMBER, 1910*

what size of Liberal majority is to have an effective voice in legislation ? ”

“ What is meant by the exception from the operation of Joint Sessions of questions of ‘ great gravity ? ’ What are questions of great gravity ? Who is going to decide ? . . . ”

“ The Referendum would, in effect, as regards all-important legislation, give by Statute to the House of Lords the power, which it already claims and which we strenuously deny to it, to compel, when it differs from the popular House, what would be to all intents and purposes a Dissolution and a General Election. . . . ”

“ The Referendum would impair, if it did not entirely destroy, the sense of Parliamentary responsibility. . . . ”

“ It would really destroy the law of Government by Representation. ”

The Dissolution took place on November 28, 1910.

The result of the Election was that parties remained very much as they were. Liberals and Unionists came back in practically identical numbers. On the Constitutional proposals which had been submitted to the country the Government had, with the co-operation of the Nationalists and the Labour Party, a majority in the United Kingdom of fully 120. Leaving the Irish on both sides out of the reckoning, they had a majority in Great Britain of not less than 60.

## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

The exact figures were :

Liberals . . . . .	272
Irish Nationalists . . . . .	84
Labour Members . . . . .	42
	<hr/>
	398
 Unionists . . . . .	 272

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PARLIAMENT ACT

■

**R**EINFORCED by this fresh expression of the popular Will, at the earliest possible moment in the first Session of the new House of Commons in 1911, the Government reintroduced the Parliament Bill. The Second Reading was carried on March 2 by a majority of 125, and, after 16 days had been given to the Committee and Report Stages, the Bill was read a third time by a majority of 121 on May 15.

The real theatre of interest in this momentous Session was the House of Lords.

On March 30 Lord Lansdowne moved an Address to the King praying his assent to the introduction of a Bill limiting the Prerogative of the Crown relating to the creation of peerages and the issue to Peers of Writs of Summons. The Government raised no difficulty, and advised His Majesty to assent to the prayer.

A "Reconstitution Bill" was thereupon introduced by Lord Lansdowne and came up for Second Reading on the same day on which the Parliament Bill was passed by the House of Commons. It was on the lines already indicated as the Unionist alternative. The debate, which extended over four days, was described by Lord Willoughby de Broke as the "saddest" which they had ever had; not perhaps without reason, for the Conservative Bill proposed to put an end to the ancient doctrine and

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

practice of the Constitution that an hereditary Peerage carried with it, as of right, legislative Functions. If it became law, a large number, indeed a majority, of the existing members of the then House of Lords knew that they would have no hope of ever sitting there again.

No more was heard of the Bill, after it had received the perfunctory tribute of a Second Reading. A week later (May 23) the House was called upon to face realities ; for upon that day the debate on the Second Reading of the Parliament Bill was opened. As was natural enough, some strong language was used both upon the one side and the other ; by no one with more vehemence than by Lord Rosebery, who said :

“ We who are speaking here to-night feel that we are speaking for the last time in this House as we have known it, and perhaps for the last time in these walls at all. . . . I wish, therefore, in the final farewell, that my voice, at least, shall be raised for the last time<sup>1</sup> in a definite protest against this most ill-judged, revolutionary, and partisan measure.”

There was no Division on the Second Reading, as the opponents of the Bill were reserving their ammunition for the Committee Stage, where they thought it could be more effectively and destructively used. There was a suspension of the conflict during the Coronation festivities, which occupied the greater part of the month of June. The Bill then went into Committee, where, in the course of six days, it was as completely transformed as though no General Election had been held. The principal Amendment moved by Lord Lansdowne, substituting

<sup>1</sup> This must not be taken too literally, for later on in the discussions Lord Rosebery spoke twice.

## THE PARLIAMENT ACT

the Referendum for the Suspensory Veto, and thereby deliberately overriding the express and emphatic decision of the constituencies only seven months before, was carried on July 5 by 253 to 46.

The Bill in its mutilated and unrecognizable form was read a third time on July 20.

The "contingency" referred to in the last sentences of the Cabinet Memorandum of November 15, 1910, having now arisen, the Cabinet submitted to the King a Minute, of which, as its substance was disclosed in subsequent discussions in Parliament, there can be no objection to setting out the precise terms :

"The Amendments made in the House of Lords to the Parliament Bill are destructive of its principle and purpose, both in regard to finance and to general legislation. There is hardly one of them which, in its present form, the Government could advise the House of Commons, or the majority of the House of Commons could be persuaded, to accept. The Bill might just as well have been rejected on Second Reading. It follows that if, without any preliminary conference and arrangement, the Lords' Amendments are in due course submitted to the House of Commons they will be rejected *en bloc* by that House, and a complete deadlock between the two Houses will be created. Parliament having been twice dissolved during the last eighteen months, and the future relations between the two Houses having been at both Elections a predominant issue, a third Dissolution is wholly out of the question. Hence, in the contingency contemplated, it will be the duty of Ministers to advise the Crown to exercise its Prerogative so as to get rid of the deadlock and secure the passing of the Bill. In such circumstance Ministers cannot



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entertain any doubt that the Sovereign would feel it to be his Constitutional duty to accept their advice."

The King was pleased to signify to me that he accepted the advice of his Ministers.

I accordingly wrote the following letter to Mr. Balfour, and a similar one to Lord Lansdowne :

" 10, Downing Street,

" July 20, 1911.

" DEAR MR. BALFOUR,

" I think it is courteous and right, before any public decisions are announced, to let you know how we regard the political situation.

" When the Parliament Bill in the form which it has now assumed returns to the House of Commons, we shall be compelled to ask that House to disagree with the Lords' Amendments.

" In the circumstances, should the necessity arise, the Government will advise the King to exercise his Prerogative to secure the passing into law of the Bill in substantially the same form in which it left the House of Commons; and His Majesty has been pleased to signify that he will consider it his duty to accept, and act on, that advice.

" Yours sincerely,

" H. H. ASQUITH."

This letter was read at a meeting of the Unionist Leaders on July 21.

On Saturday, July 22, I had an audience of the King. His Majesty received Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne on the 24th, and subsequently saw me again.

The Commons met on the 24th to consider the

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Lords' Amendments, but when I rose to give in detail the grounds for the advice we had tendered to the Crown, I was persistently shouted down, and was ultimately unable to proceed on account of the disorder; a unique incident at that time, and, I believe, still, in the experience of any Leader of the House.

It is only fair to record that some of the most conspicuous of the participants in this deplorable scene subsequently expressed to me their profound regret.

In order that the country might not be left in the dark, I had the statement which I had intended to make in the House published the next morning.

Lord Lansdowne, on July 24, addressed to the Unionist Peers a letter, in which he said he had come to the conclusion that it was preferable to desist from further opposition rather than, by insisting on their Amendments, "bring about a creation of Peers in numbers which will overwhelm the present House and paralyse its action in the future without in any way retarding the passage of the Parliament Bill."

On the following day Mr. Balfour, replying to an inquiry by Lord Newton, wrote that he agreed with the advice Lord Lansdowne had given to his friends. "With Lord Lansdowne I stand; with Lord Lansdowne I am ready, if need be, to fall."

It became at once apparent that a large and influential body of Unionists were not prepared to follow this—which may be called the official—advice, for it was concurred in by Lord Curzon, Lord Midleton, Mr. Walter Long, and Mr. Bonar Law. The dissentients found a vigorous and uncompromising leader in the venerable Lord Halsbury, and, after the fashion of the Liberals in the days of the Boer War, they at once organized a dinner in his honour, "to

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

support him in his determination to insist on Lord Lansdowne's Amendments." It is interesting now to recall that in this band of stalwarts were to be found Lord Salisbury, Lord Selborne, Lord Milner, Sir Edward Carson, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Mr. F. E. Smith, Lord Hugh Cecil, and Mr. George Wyndham. A benediction on the banquet came from Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who wrote that "the country owes a great debt to Lord Halsbury, since in the crisis of her fate he has refused to surrender his principles." (Poor England! How many "crises of her fate" have I seen her encounter and survive!)

The combination which feasted Lord Halsbury was, I think, the first to be baptized "Die-Hards." Their principal whippers-in in the two Houses were Mr. Wyndham and Lord Willoughby de Broke, who had declared a short time before that "a very great deal of water, and, if necessary, a very great deal of blood, would have to flow under Westminster Bridge before the Bill was placed upon the Statute Book."

Votes of Censure on the Government for the advice given to His Majesty were moved in both Houses; in the Commons by Mr. Balfour, and in the Lords by Lord Curzon.

In the Commons debate, "at His Majesty's strong desire, and therefore, of course, with his express permission," I disclosed the communications with the Sovereign, which, up to that moment, had been treated both by the King and by his Ministers as confidential.

The Censure was rejected in the Commons, on August 7, by 365 to 246, and was carried in the Lords, on the following day, by 281 to 68.

The Commons, on August 8, disagreed with the principal Lords' Amendment to the Parliament Bill

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by a majority of 106, and the next word was with the House of Lords.

The two views which were struggling for mastery in the Unionist party were defined by Lord Lansdowne and Lord Halsbury: "We hold," said Lord Lansdowne, "that it will be wiser to abstain from further intervention in these discussions, that we should assume no responsibility for the Bill; and that we should make clear that, whenever an opportunity presents itself to us, we shall spare no effort to redress the balance of the Constitution which you have so gravely disturbed."

Lord Halsbury, on behalf of the "Die-Hards," speaking of "this boggy of the Royal Prerogative," declared that he would not yield to the threat. "Nothing in the world will induce me to vote for the Bill, or to abstain from voting against a Bill which I believe to be wrong and immoral and a scandalous example of legislation."

Lord Morley, who, in the enforced absence from illness of Lord Crewe, led the Government forces, has described the scene which followed:

"Late in the evening of this first day an intimation was conveyed to me of uneasiness, lest the announcement of the King's acceptance of the advice to create Peers had not been made with such distinct emphasis as to shake the obstinate and fixed disbelief of some, and the random miscalculation of ulterior consequences in others. The Prime Minister's statement in the Commons was unmistakable, but when the politician's mind is feverish, be he peer or commoner, he catches at a straw. The words 'natural reluctance'<sup>1</sup> were stretched into all manner of unnatural interpretations.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Crewe had said in the Censure debate that His Majesty entertained the suggestion of a possible creation of Peers "with natural and, if I may be permitted to use the phrase, in my opinion, with legitimate reluctance."

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To dispel these illusions, so pregnant with disaster, was rightly judged imperative if the Bill was to have a chance. The occasion for setting misunderstandings straight was evidently to be found in my coming reply to the questions that had been put in the first day's debate. Next morning, accordingly, I found words, dispatched the formula for submission to the King, and received it back with his 'entire approval.'<sup>1</sup>

On the following day, in response to appeals from Lord Midleton and Lord Rosebery for a precise statement of the authority which Ministers had received from the King :

"At once," writes Lord Morley in his "Recollections," "I drew from my pocket and read out the short paper with the words accurately defining the terms of the Royal Assent. The silence was intense ; for a moment or two there was a hum of curiosity and dispute as to whether it had been this word or that. Then a member of the Front Bench opposite, rising at the table, eagerly begged me to repeat it. No encore was ever more cheerfully granted, amid loud approval from the benches behind me, and perplexed silence in front."<sup>2</sup>

The words were : "His Majesty would assent to a creation of Peers sufficient in number to guard against any possible combination of the different parties in Opposition, by which the Parliament Bill might be exposed a second time to defeat."

Lord Rosebery thereupon again intervened. "This," he said, "is the most solemn moment the House of Lords has had to face in my lifetime or in that of many men much older. By a wise concession

<sup>1</sup> "Recollections," II, p. 351.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352-3.

## *THE PARLIAMENT ACT*

to the feeling of the people, under the guidance of a leader whom no one ever dared to accuse of cowardice, the Duke of Wellington, the House of Lords preserved its existence for eighty years, when without that concession it would not have had three years of life. That is one example. We stand now at the parting of the ways. Whatever happens, I recognize for my part that nothing can ever restore the House of Lords. After the Second Reading of the Bill, to which we were compelled reluctantly to yield our assent, the House of Lords, as we have known it, disappears. It is possible that if this Bill be allowed to go through to-night there may still be a considerable balance of party which may be of great use in opposing the Government. There will still be a force left in this House to oppose and even sometimes to thwart the dangerous measures of the Government. If this Bill be allowed to pass, Europe and the Empire will be spared the sight of a scandal which may go far to weaken the hold of the centre of the Empire on its component parts, and we shall be left, at any rate, with a certain amount of vitality, without the strain on the Constitution involved in the creation of hundreds of Peers ; whereas, on the other hypothesis, we shall be left with no power at all, flattened out completely, with an addition of hundreds of Peers, added to the House under a most degrading franchise, and the ruin of this ancient Constitutional Assembly will be as complete as its worst enemies would desire."

This was perhaps the most significant and momentous pronouncement in this historic debate.

Of the division, Lord Morley writes :

" As one who had taken part in a thousand parliamentary divisions I felt that the universal strain to-night was far more intense than any of them—

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

even the historic night five-and-twenty years before, when the House of Commons had thrown out the first Home Rule Bill. On that occasion the House, excepting perhaps the then Prime Minister himself, had a good guess of what must be coming. To-night, for the three or four hours between my crucial announcement in the afternoon, and the Division at night, the result was still to all of us profoundly dark; and dark it remained in the dead silence only broken by the counting of the tellers, down to the very moment of fate."<sup>1</sup>

In the Division the motion for insisting on the Amendment was defeated by a majority of seventeen (131 to 114). The Peers voting with the Government were classified as consisting of 81 Liberals, 37 Unionists, and 13 Prelates (including both the Archbishops).

The only "Official" Unionists who voted in the minority were Lord Halsbury, Lord Salisbury, Lord Selborne, and the two party Whips, Lord Waldegrave and Lord Churchill. The remainder abstained. In the same lobby were to be found Lord Roberts and Lord Milner, and two Bishops—Bangor and Worcester.<sup>2</sup>

The feelings of the Die-Hards are expressed in Wyndham's letters. "We were beaten," he wrote, "by the Bishops and the Rats."<sup>3</sup> And a fortnight

<sup>1</sup> "Recollections," II, p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> A comment made at the time on the votes of the Bishops by Lord Robert Cecil is worth recording. "That curious belief in their infallibility," he wrote in the *Saturday Review* (Aug. 12, 1911), "which is so characteristic of those who, like Bishops, judges and schoolmasters, habitually speak without fear of contradiction, induced the Episcopal Bench to believe that they understood the requirements of a strictly political situation better than did the statesmen and politicians, whose opinions they professed to share. And so the Bishops rushed in where Lord Lansdowne feared to tread. It is doubtful if, when the House of Lords comes to be reformed (should that ever come to pass), there will be found more than thirty-seven supporters of the retention of the Episcopal vote."

<sup>3</sup> "Wyndham," p. 699.



*Photo: Elliott and Fry.*

GEORGE WYNDHAM.





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later he classified the thirty-seven Unionists in the Government lobby as 31 traitors and 6 mountebanks.<sup>1</sup>

The Parliament Bill, on August 18, 1911, took its place on the Statute Book (1 and 2 Geo. V., c. 13), where, I hazard the prediction that, in all its essential provisions, it is likely to remain.

<sup>1</sup> "Wyndham," p. 704.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHANGES OF PERSONNEL, 1910-1913

THE passing of the Parliament Act is a landmark in our Constitutional history, and the date may serve as a resting-place in this narrative before I proceed to its later stages.

I will add nothing to what I have said in the immediately preceding Chapters, by way of explanation or defence of the strategy of the Government; in particular, of the double General Election of 1910, and the handling of the Royal Prerogative. I am glad to find that it is warmly commended by Mr. Spender,<sup>1</sup> whose approval is far from being that of a blind partisan, as appears by the adverse criticism which he proceeds to offer upon our later dealings with "Carsonism." As a matter of history, there can be little doubt that, though the Liberal flood-tide of 1906 had subsided, the Government had in this struggle the steady, if not enthusiastic, support of popular opinion. This is sufficiently shown by the practically identical results of the two Elections held in January and December, 1910. In the end, an actual deadlock was prevented by the prudent counsels of Lord Lansdowne and his principal colleagues. If the "Die-Hard" policy had prevailed, it is clear that (after the two Dissolutions) the only Constitutional outlet from the impasse created would have been to fall back upon the reserve power of the Royal Prerogative.

Lord Halsbury was verging on the age of ninety

<sup>1</sup> "The Public Life," I, p. 110.

## CHANGES OF PERSONNEL, 1910-1913

when he took command of the "Die-Hards," and gallantly headed their charge into the "last ditch." At the Bar he had been a powerful and successful advocate, and he had held the Great Seal for a longer time than any Chancellor since Lord Eldon. If he can hardly be described as a great Judge, he was in an eminent degree in his judicial capacity *par negotiis*. He preserved his mental and physical powers till he was some years over ninety, rivalling in that respect an illustrious predecessor on the Woolsack, to whom he bore no other resemblance—Lord Lyndhurst. In politics he was a True-Blue Tory of the full-blooded type, who despised the compromises, the half-way houses, the parti-coloured and patchwork policies, which, in his view, marked the degeneracy and even the decadence of English public life. Like Lord Milner, whose political pedigree and creed were miles apart from his own, but who also had in his temperament a strain of unbending obstinacy, he was prepared to hold out at all costs, and to "damn the consequences." The type died with him and will never be replaced.

It will be convenient here to summarize in advance some changes in the personnel of politics which took place between 1910 and 1913.

1910: H. Gladstone became Governor of South Africa, and was succeeded at the Home Office by Winston Churchill, whose place at the Board of Trade was taken by Sydney Buxton. Rufus Isaacs was appointed Attorney-General, and John Simon Solicitor-General. Lord Wolverhampton resigned from physical disablement. Lord Morley exchanged the India Office for that of Lord President of the Council. His own account of the transaction is to be found in his "Recollections":<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> II, p. 343.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

"In November, 1910, I resigned my post at the India Office, partly because I was tired, partly from a feeling that a new Viceroy<sup>1</sup> would have fairer openings with a new Secretary of State; partly, too, that I might have a farewell chance of literary self-collection. Of the last little came, and perhaps it was not really so strong an impulse as I flattered myself that it would prove. Be that as it may, the Prime Minister pressed me to remain in his Cabinet either as Lord President of the Council or Privy Seal, and I went to the Privy Council."

Upon this Mr. Spender makes the following comment:

"He constantly asserted his desire to be relieved of the burdens of the India Office; but I think I am a competent witness to the fact that he was painfully astonished when one of his many resignations was finally accepted."<sup>2</sup>

It is true that Morley had a rather awkward habit of hasty resignation, as had Mr. Gladstone at one stage of his career; in the days, for example, of Lord Palmerston's Cabinet (1859-65). Palmerston used to declare that he had a drawer full of his (Mr. Gladstone's) resignations.<sup>3</sup> I suspect that every Prime Minister, who has preserved his correspondence, could produce remarkable specimens, which never saw the light of publicity, of this kind of communication: some of them from very unexpected quarters.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Hardinge had just been selected to succeed Lord Minto: his appointment terminated, most happily as it turned out, what had threatened to be a controversy among responsible persons as to the claims of Lord Kitchener.

<sup>2</sup> "The Public Life," I, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Villiers, walking down Whitehall one day during Palmerston's last Government, observed a dense cloud of smoke arising from the chimneys of No. 10 Downing Street. "I suppose," he said, "they are burning Gladstone's letters of resignation."—"Disraeli and Gladstone," by D. C. Somervell, 1925, p. 123.)

## CHANGES OF PERSONNEL, 1910-1913

On the next page is a characteristic note tossed to me by Morley at the Cabinet while we were discussing Naval Shipbuilding in 1909.

I will not attempt to pass in review Morley's administration of the India Office, or to discuss the "Morley-Minto" reforms, further than to say that in my judgment they marked a solid and substantial advance on the road of wise government. It was, no doubt, an ironic stroke of Fortune that yoked together in the same team a pair of public men superficially so ill matched as the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. That they pulled as well together as they did is much to the credit of both. Lord Morley's narrative of their régime covers some 200 pages of his "Recollections," and is largely composed of extracts from his letters to the Viceroy, a form of composition in which he was a great literary artist. Lord Minto could not lay claim to any such faculty; but it is only just to say that his own letters are as well worth reading as those of his gifted correspondent, to which they are, indeed, an illuminating and indispensable supplement.<sup>1</sup>

Morley and I were now the only two members of the Gladstone-Rosebery Cabinet of 1892-95 who remained in the Government.

He was followed at the India Office by Lord Crewe, and Mr. Harcourt became Secretary for the Colonies.

1911: In the autumn of 1911 Mr. McKenna and Mr. Churchill, at my request, exchanged the offices of Home Secretary and First Lord of the Admiralty. Of Mr. Balfour's resignation this same year of the Leadership of his party I shall speak later.

1912: Lord Loreburn resigned the Chancellorship

<sup>1</sup> See "Lord Minto," by John Buchan. Lord Minto's troubles are illustrated by a letter (July, 1910) from him to Sir A. Bigge, p. 311.

Thorp Smith: Amer.

10, Downing Street,  
Whitehall, S.W.

Thorp Smith.  
Miles !

Received  
1 Feb 09

My bronchial  
tubes are slowly  
wring me towards  
Fever.

You may build as  
many as you like, I  
find this money.

## CHANGES OF PERSONNEL, 1910-1913

on grounds of health, and was succeeded by Lord Haldane. Lord Carrington also retired and was created a Marquis. Colonel Seely became Secretary of State for War. The Attorney-General (Sir R. Isaacs) was for the first time admitted to the Cabinet.

1913: The Unionist Party in the House of Commons suffered severe losses in the premature deaths of George Wyndham (June) and Alfred Lyttelton (July).

Lord Loreburn was an academic generation, or more, senior to me at Balliol, where he was a contemporary of Lord Lansdowne. He was a fine classical scholar, winning the most prized of University distinctions—the “Ireland”—and is, so far as I know, the only Scholar of Balliol who ever kept wicket in the ‘Varsity Eleven. He went to the Bar, and, being an old Cheltenham boy, he had the good fortune to “Devil” for Sir Henry James, who had been in his youth at that school. “Bob Reid,” as he was universally styled until he reached the Woolsack, soon acquired a good practice of his own, and took silk, though he never had a commanding position among the advocates of his time.<sup>1</sup> He was from the first more absorbed in politics than in his profession, and he was still quite a young man when he entered Parliament in 1880 as Member for Hereford. He was a stalwart and uncompromising Radical, and though he did not attain to conspicuous distinction as a debater in the House of Commons, he was soon marked out for Law Office, and became in Lord Rosebery’s Administration successively Solicitor- and Attorney-General. He and I, in early days, were intimate

<sup>1</sup> He was (next to Sir Richard Webster) the favourite victim of Frank Lockwood’s genial but merciless pencil during the weary months when we all sat together as Counsel before the Parnell Commission.



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personal and political friends, and his Chambers in the Temple were for some years a favourite rendezvous, where, in association with Haldane, Scrutton (now Lord Justice), George Greenwood, J. A. B. Bruce, and other militant spirits, we organized the activities of the Eighty Club in the campaign against Coercion and in the propaganda of Home Rule. There was a direct and virile robustness both in his creed and his character which was singularly attractive, and masked some latent complexities of mind and temperament (as sometimes happens with Scotsmen) which time developed and made more obvious. Throughout the South African troubles he was what was called, in the current dialect, a strong "pro-Boer," and he viewed with ever-growing suspicion the "Imperialist" leanings of some of his old friends and fellow-fighters. When the Liberal Administration was formed in December, 1905, C.-B. was determined that Reid should be Lord Chancellor, and he held that office for over six years. He proved a sound Judge, with a rare and happy gift of terseness and lucidity. What was more remarkable and less expected, he almost at once, without any compromise or concealment of his views, gained the ear of the House of Lords, and became by universal consent one of its most powerful and authoritative debaters. But in counsel he was more and more inclined to isolation and reserve; and looked with a somewhat morose eye upon the foreign policy of Grey, and the naval and military proposals of Haldane, McKenna and Churchill. He was also, I think, disposed to be critical of the finance both of myself and of Lloyd George. But he remained to the end an ardent Home Ruler, and a relentless opponent of the Veto of the House of Lords. I cannot recall any difference, either upon general

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policy or upon specific measures, which ever led him to suggest resignation, and I was very glad, in the distribution of Coronation honours, to advise that he should be promoted in the Peerage. In later years he wrote a book on the War, which, both in spirit and in substance, was regretted by some of his old colleagues and friends.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MR. BALFOUR'S RESIGNATION

ON November 8, 1911, Mr. Balfour provided the political world with a surprise of the most sensational kind by announcing his resignation of the Leadership of the Conservative Party. Only two days before he had made, at a dinner of the "Nonconformist Unionist" Association, a combative speech in his best style, which contained no premonitory hint of his intention.

The reason which he assigned for his retirement, in an address delivered to the City of London Conservatives, was the same as that which had been put forward for a similar step, nearly forty years earlier, by Mr. Gladstone; the need of the toil-worn and veteran political Mariner for repose. He had been in Parliament, as he reminded his audience, for 38 years; Leader of the Unionist Party for 20; and Leader of the House of Commons for 10. He wished to be relieved of his responsibilities before he could be "suspected of suffering from the most insidious of all diseases—the disease which comes upon those who, without losing their health or their intellect, nevertheless get somewhat *petrified*." Upon the symptoms and the dangers of this malady of "Petrifaction" he dilated with all his characteristic freshness and force. The matter appeared to him to be urgent. For "what chance has my unfortunate successor, if he has no time to get

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into his saddle . . . if he is suddenly left, in the very stress of our destinies, to deal with a situation which he has never been able to survey or contemplate?" Finally, he intimated that the "repose," which he claimed he had earned, would not be found incompatible with active service to his party and the country.

"Repose," as the career of these two distinguished men proves, is a relative and flexible term. Mr. Gladstone, after his retirement, was three times Prime Minister; and Mr. Balfour, though he has never resumed the ostensible Leadership of his Party, has during the last ten years (1915-1925) been, with brief interludes, a member of the Cabinet in a succession of exacting and responsible offices.

I took the opportunity the following day, at the Lord Mayor's Banquet (November 9), of expressing my own feelings and those of my Party at this untoward event:

"It has been my fortune, in a public life which now extends over more than a quarter of a century, to be engaged in continuous and almost ceaseless controversy with Mr. Balfour, and during the last twelve months our encounters have been, perhaps, more frequent and not less uncompromising than ever before. It follows that I know as well as anybody—perhaps better than anybody—the range and reach of his resources both for attack and for defence:

'quantus

In clypeum assurgat, quo turbine torqueat hastam;'

and from a purely selfish point of view there is no one who has equal reason for gratitude, or at any rate for relief, at his retirement—not, I am glad to

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think, from the arena of political combat, but from the captaincy of the opposing army. But I can honestly say that any such feeling is swallowed up in a sense of the irreparable loss which his withdrawal from the constant interchange of cut and thrust involves in the daily life of Parliament.

"I will only venture to predict that it will be long before we shall see again in the forefront of political strife a personality so invaluable to his friends, so formidable to his foes; so interesting and attractive to friends and foes alike; or such a unique combination of gifts and powers as has made Mr. Balfour by universal consent the most distinguished Member of the greatest deliberative Assembly in the world."

There was, not unnaturally, consternation in the Conservative rank and file at this grievous and irreparable loss, and the Party "microbes" (as Mr. Balfour called them), the professional critics and grumblers, perforce suspended their activities. Never were the Tadpoles and Tapers presented with a more slippery problem than the choice of his successor. It seemed likely for a time that there would be a close contest between the two candidates who ultimately emerged—Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. Walter Long, both of them Tariff Reformers. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who, I believe, had up to that moment never labelled himself a Conservative, was not acceptable to a number of those whose Toryism was bred in the bone. Mr. Long, on the other hand, the bluest of blue-blooded Tories, was not acceptable to a number of those whose Unionism was of a moderate, and in some directions of a progressive, type. A compromise was at last arranged, and both retired in favour of Mr. Bonar Law—

## MR. BALFOUR'S RESIGNATION

the most *acharné* of all the Tariff Reformers—who was unanimously elected at the Carlton Club on November 13.

It is impossible to conceive of a greater contrast than that between the old Leader and the new. It is enough to say that the selection of Mr. Bonar Law was agreed on all hands to be a bold experiment.



■

*PART V*

■





## CHAPTER I

### NATIONAL INSURANCE : PAYMENT OF MEMBERS

**I**N the sphere of social reform the chief legislative achievement of 1911 was the passing of the National Insurance Bill, which will always be associated with the name of its principal author, Mr. Lloyd George. It provided for the first time a scheme of National Insurance on a contributory basis for the industrial population, against sickness, invalidity and unemployment. It was the foundation and starting-point for all subsequent legislation, actual or attempted. The idea was novel; the interests that had to be met and conciliated, notably the Approved Societies and the doctors, were powerful and well organized; the machinery to be set up was of necessity tentative and complicated. The conduct of the measure required much tactful diplomacy behind the scenes and outside the walls of Parliament, and also the most careful strategy on the floor of the House of Commons, where it is not uncharitable to describe the attitude of the Opposition as that of a Party willing to scratch and yet afraid to kill.

The Third Reading was not directly opposed, but was met from the Conservative Front Bench by a dilatory amendment, which would have been in fact, though not in form, fatal to the Bill. The new Leader (Mr. Bonar Law) sought to explain the reasons why he and his followers could not vote either for or against the Third Reading :

“ On this question we decline to say either Yes or

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

No. If we say *No* it implies that we are opposed to the principles and objects of the Bill. If we say *Yes* it implies that we approve of the Bill as it is presented to the House now." (December 6, 1911.)

I felt bound to congratulate him on such a promising first appearance in his new rôle. "The right hon. gentleman," I said, "who is a very popular Member of the House—and we all wish him great success in his task—has followed one of the ablest dialecticians that Parliament has ever produced; but we find that 'Amurath an Amurath succeeds.' I do not think, though I was a careful and close observer of the career and public action of his predecessor, that even he ever discovered, except perhaps in the early days of Tariff Reform, that there was a half-way house between *Yes* and *No*."

The Bill had an easy time in the House of Lords, where it passed through all its stages in a couple of days, and it received the Royal Assent on December 16. This attitude was adopted at the instance of Lord Lansdowne, who advised that the acceptance of the Second Reading was the "wiser course," and that it would be no use to "make a sham attempt" to revise at later stages its detailed provisions.

The Act, as was inevitable, was far from popular in the early stages of its operation, and was anything but a "vote-catching" measure. Several by-elections went unfavourably to the Government, notably one in South Manchester, where one of our Whips was defeated (March, 1912). I may quote a few sentences on the subject from a speech which I made at Covent Garden Theatre on March 8, 1912:

"No one foresaw more clearly than my right hon. friend (Mr. Lloyd George) and his colleagues, and from the first we were never under any illusion about

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it whatever, that in its early months, perhaps in its early years, such a measure, based on the contributory principle, with burdens actual or imminent, and with benefits prospective and contingent, must, from the point of view of the party electoral balance sheet, be written down for the time being not as an asset but a liability. And so undoubtedly it has proved.

“ But that does not in the least degree or for a single moment affect our satisfaction as a Government and as a Party. We have been able to secure what in the domain of social reform will be found in the long run the greatest boon ever conferred upon the working people of this country. I will go a step further, in view of some improvident things which have recently been said, and I will venture to predict with the utmost confidence, and stake whatever reputation I have as a political prophet on this: that the Tories, if and when they have the chance, the Tories, who are now making party capital and avowedly winning bye-elections by a position of criticism, will not venture to lay a finger on a single one of its fundamental principles.”

This same session of 1911 witnessed in addition to the Parliament Act another constitutional innovation: the Payment of Members of the House of Commons. On the same day (August 10) on which the opposition to the Parliament Bill finally collapsed in the House of Lords, a resolution for the payment of a salary of £400 a year to all non-official Members of the House of Commons was moved on behalf of the Government by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George.

Mr. Lee brought forward an amendment on behalf of the official Opposition, declaring that any such payment would be “ an indefensible violation of the principle of gratuitous public service.” In the course

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of his speech he said that they had just seen the institution, so far as the House of Commons was concerned, for the first time in the history of any civilized state, of Single-Chamber Government. "In his personal belief, the effect of the present proposal would be even more marked and more disastrous than the passing of the Parliament Bill itself." He was supported in the division lobby by Mr. Stanley Baldwin, Mr. Cave, Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. Walter Long.

The Government motion was carried by a majority of 98, and a few days later (August 14) the Supplementary Estimate providing the money for the current year was approved by a majority of 113.

In each succeeding year—whatever Government of any party, or coalition of parties, has been in power—the provision has continued to be made. No one now disputes that it is an indispensable item in the annual expenditure of the nation.

## CHAPTER II

MISCELLANEA, 1905-1912

### I.—WOMAN SUFFRAGE

**D**URING all these years the cause of Woman's Suffrage was kept by its promoters in the limelight of the political stage, and almost every session Bills were introduced to give effect to their aim. It was a subject upon which both political parties were much divided; in my own Cabinet, for instance, I took one view and Sir Edward Grey the other; and the Government gave full Parliamentary facilities for its discussion. As the division lists showed, the balance of opinion in the House of Commons, up to the outbreak of the War, was, though not very decisively, adverse to the experiment. Ultimately, in the later years of the War, after, and as the result of, the Speaker's Conference on Representation, which I had arranged just before I resigned office in December, 1916, a large measure of electoral reconstruction was introduced and passed. It included the Enfranchisement of Women, though in a restricted and illogical form. For reasons which I gave fully at the time, I and others did not persist in our opposition in the changed conditions brought about by the War.

The agitation, as it was carried on by the more extreme supporters of the "Women's Cause," was marked by a novel and disagreeable feature, the adoption of what were called "militant" methods. They began with the persistent and irrelevant interruption of public meetings called to deal with other

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matters, of which the first conspicuous example was Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's great meeting at the Albert Hall on the eve of the General Election of 1906. But in process of time the campaign developed into a species of vendetta of personal violence, in which dog-whips and red pepper were among the favourite weapons of the so-called Suffragettes, and which came to be directed against, not only avowed antagonists like myself, but with almost equal virulence against those who were suspected of being lukewarm or treacherous supporters. Even our children had to be vigilantly protected against the menace of abduction. The resources of the law were severely taxed by the fact that the outrage-mongers were for the most part women intoxicated by a genuine fanaticism. Not a few of them showed the temper of the confessors and martyrs of a persecuted faith. When they were sent to prison, some of them obstinately refused food, and the unavoidable resort to forcible feeding excited widespread and not unnatural repugnance, which Mr. McKenna's "Cat and Mouse" Bill of 1913—enabling the Home Secretary to release such prisoners under licence, with power to rearrest them without warrant—did not allay.

"Militancy" ceased, as if by magic, with the outbreak of the War in 1914, and never reappeared.

### II.—COAL WAGES LEGISLATION

The early months of 1912 were troubled by a national Coal Strike. It arose out of a vote of the members of the Miners' Federation on the question: "Are you in favour of giving notice to establish the principle of an individual Minimum Wage for every man and boy working underground in Great Britain?" The result of the ballot, in January,

## COAL WAGES LEGISLATION

was as follows:—For, 445,000; Against, 115,000. Majority for, 330,000.

Accordingly, strike notices were sent in, to take effect on February 29. On February 7, at a national conference of owners and men, the owners refused to accept the principle of the Minimum Wage.

The Industrial Council at the earliest possible moment set to work to deal with the situation, and on their advice I invited both owners and men to confer with the Government. Separate meetings between the Government on the one side and owners and men on the other were held continuously during February, the Government being represented by the Prime Minister, Sir E. Grey, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. S. Buxton. We put forward and urged upon both parties proposals for settlement, but unavailingly, and as a last resort (after the strike notices had expired) we held joint conferences with owners and men. But both remained obdurate.

In these circumstances we felt that the time had come for legislation, and on March 19 introduced the Coal Mines (Minimum Wage) Bill. Mr. Balfour moved its rejection, but the Second Reading was carried by a majority of 123; the Third Reading by a majority of 165; the Bill was unopposed in the House of Lords, and on March 29 it received the Royal Assent.

The Bill affirmed the principle of a Minimum Wage, but fixed no figure, leaving the determination of the actual rates in each area to the District Boards. Both proposals were assailed—the first, by a large body of the owners and by the official Opposition, as vicious in principle, and a weak concession to organized force; the second, by the representatives of the miners, who demanded that not only the principle of the minimum



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rate, but the actual rates themselves should be embodied in the Bill.

As the matter is of more than merely historical interest, I may summarize the argument which I used in the House of Commons on both points (March 19 and March 21, 1912).

(1) As to the need for a Minimum Wage, as an implied term in the miner's contract of employment :

"There are cases of frequent occurrence where the miner working underground is prevented, from causes for which he is in no sense responsible, from earning what he is able and willing to earn. The commonest of such cases is where a hewer finds himself face to face with a seam of coal which is technically called an 'abnormal' place, i.e. a place where the physical conditions are such that he cannot, with the best will in the world, secure from his labour of the day anything like an average output."

There was, I pointed out, also another frequent cause of undeserved inequality in remuneration, even when the place where the miner was set to work was not "abnormal," viz. his being prevented from sending up to the surface the amount of coal which he was ready and able to hew, by deficiency of tubs, imperfect condition of the roadway, and other defects, of slackness, or want of organization, in the underground management of the mine.

(2) As to the inexpediency of naming figures for minimum rates in the Act itself, I dwelt on the complexity and variety of the conditions in the coal-mining area, which made the determination of the actual rates, in any given district, peculiarly a matter for local bodies armed with the necessary local knowledge. And, on more general grounds, I deprecated setting up the precedent of fixing a figure of wages in an Act of

## TRADE UNION FUNDS

Parliament. The figure fixed as the minimum would tend to be treated as a maximum, and at election times would inevitably become the subject of agitation, of bidding and counter-bidding, in constituencies where the particular class of worker affected were largely represented.

In reply to the suggestion that the Government had yielded to organized pressure,<sup>1</sup> it was sufficient to point out that the terms of settlement contained in the Bill had, in substance, been vainly urged by us in the negotiations upon both parties to the dispute.

The Miners' Federation met early in April and held a National Conference, at which the advice of the Executive to resume work at once, without waiting for the settlement of the minimum rates by the District Boards, was endorsed by a substantial majority. The strike, which had lasted for six weeks, was thus brought to an end.

### III.—TRADE UNION FUNDS

The Trade Unions Bill, though it did not become an Act until March, 1913, belongs to the session of 1912. It was a Government measure, to deal with the unexpected situation created by the "Osborne" judgment, which decided that Trade Unions had no power to collect or administer funds for political purposes. The object of the Bill (as defined by me to a Trade Union deputation on February 15, 1912) was to restore to the Unions "wide powers to apply

<sup>1</sup> Some extremely strong language was used in this sense by the Conservative Leaders in both Houses. "What has converted the Ministers," said Lord Lansdowne, "is the appearance of a colossal conspiracy which has held up the country" (House of Lords, March 27, 1912). Mr. Balfour developed the same theme with much gusto: "Can anybody quote from history . . . a parallel case? Has any Feudal Baron ever exercised his powers in the manner in which the Leaders of this great Union are using theirs?" And he went on to cite, as comparatively venial examples, the "Village Money-lender" and the "American Trust" (House of Commons, March 21, 1912).

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

by resolution their funds as they had been hitherto applied," and at the same time to provide adequate precautions and safeguards for the protection of dissentient minorities. The discussions, which were long and at times acrimonious, turned largely upon the nature of these safeguards, which were denounced by the Conservatives as insufficient and illusory, and by the Labour Members as burdensome and excessive. In the end Mr. Bonar Law advised his followers not to resist the Bill; the Third Reading was carried without a division; and the House of Lords allowed it to find its way to the Statute Book.

### IV.—RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT, 1905-1912

I may close this chapter before I approach the troubled waters which were before us, by quoting from a summary, not, I hope, too self-complacent, which I gave of the record of the Government, on its domestic side, when addressing my constituents<sup>1</sup> at the beginning of 1913:

"We are now in the eighth year of our Administration, and how do matters stand? By universal admission our trade, at home and over the seas, was never so prosperous, or the percentage of unemployment in this kingdom so small. We have placed on the Statute Book the two greatest social reforms, measured by the extent of the relief which they give against the vicissitudes of life, which Parliament has ever enacted—the Act for Old Age Pensions and the National Insurance Act. We have made provision, in the face of growing difficulties and exigencies, for maintaining unchallenged the Command of the Sea which is essential to our national and Imperial life. In carrying out these costly purposes we have

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Leven, Jan. 29, 1913.

*GOVERNMENT RECORD, 1905-1912*

not only not added a penny to the debt of the nation, but we have diminished its aggregate capital liabilities at a faster rate, and by a larger sum, than have any of our predecessors. We have reduced the Tea Duty by a penny and the Sugar Duty by one halfpenny. We have met the new burdens by taxation, so arranged that it does not clog the springs of industry or check the accumulation of capital; while it has not contributed in any way to the increase which has been going on, from world-wide causes, in the cost of the necessities of life."

## CHAPTER III

### 1913: THE PARLIAMENT ACT AT WORK

**I**N the two sessions of 1912 and 1913 the Government proceeded to put the Parliament Act into operation in accordance with their pledges.

The session of 1912 was prolonged from February, 1912, to March, 1913. The opening night in the House of Commons was rendered interesting by the fact that the Address was seconded by Mr. W. G. C. Gladstone, grandson of the illustrious statesman, who had been returned in the previous autumn at a by-election for Kilmarnock. A life full of much promise of public service was destined to be cut short by his heroic death at the Front in the Great War.

A large part of this protracted session was devoted to the discussion of the Home Rule Bill. Its various stages occupied nearly sixty days of Parliamentary time, and it did not leave the House of Commons until the month of January, 1913, when it received a Third Reading by a majority of 110. The average majority in the almost countless divisions during its progress was well over 100, and, if the Irish vote on both sides was subtracted, it had, throughout, the support of a substantial majority of the representatives of Great Britain.

It then went to the House of Lords, and after four days' debate was thrown out on Second Reading, on January 30, 1913, by a majority of 257 (326 to 69). It may be recalled that the corresponding figures twenty years before (in 1893) were 419 to 41.

## THE PARLIAMENT ACT AT WORK, 1913

A similar fate befell the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, which occupied in the Commons 27 days of the same session. The Third Reading was carried by a majority of 107, and a few days later (February 13, 1913) the Bill was rejected on Second Reading in the House of Lords by a majority of 201 (252:51).

The session of 1912-13 was at last brought to an end by prorogation on March 7, and after an interval of only a couple of days Parliament was reopened, and the session of 1913 began.

The Irish and Welsh Bills were again proceeded with under the Parliament Act, and passed through the Commons by substantially unchanged majorities. They were both again rejected by the House of Lords, where in each case an amendment to the Second Reading was carried in identical terms: "That this House declines to proceed with the consideration of the Bill until it has been submitted to the judgment of the country."<sup>1</sup>

In reference to this form of procedure, Lord Loreburn put the pertinent question, "whether in the event of a General Election the Unionist Party would abide by the result."

Lord Curzon replied (as he stated, with the express authority of Lord Lansdowne):

"In the event of the result of the General Election being to indicate *substantial approval* of the measure of His Majesty's Government, he (Lord Lansdowne) will be prepared to advise your Lordships to go into Committee on the Bill, and endeavour to remove some of the *blemishes and undesirable features* by which it is characterized, and to ask all parties in the House to join in the endeavour to shape it into a *more passable and palatable* measure."

<sup>1</sup> The Plural Voting Bill received the same treatment.

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I have italicized some phrases in this ingenious declaration, for the light which they throw upon the conception then entertained by a large majority of the House of Lords of the meaning and effect of a Referendum.

But the fortunes of the Irish Bill were now entering upon a new phase, in which the centre of interest was to be found, not at Westminster, but outside the walls of Parliament.

## CHAPTER IV

### ULSTER (I)

IT was more than a quarter of a century since Lord Randolph Churchill had uttered his famous slogan: "Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right." In the debates of the Session 1912-13 on the Home Rule Bill, Ulster once again became the pivot of the Irish controversy.

As Mr. John Redmond had pointed out a year before,<sup>1</sup> there was, in the true and full sense of the term, "no *Ulster* question." The province of Ulster consisted of ten counties, and in five of these (Tyrone, Fermanagh, Monaghan, Donegal, and Cavan) the Roman Catholics were a majority—in the last three, an overwhelming majority—of the population. In the whole province the Catholics numbered 44 per cent., and, if Belfast were omitted, just short of 50 per cent. A united and homogeneous Ulster was therefore a figment, but that fact, though it contracted the range, did not diminish the gravity, of the problem.

Almost immediately after the passing of the Parliament Act, a conference of Ulster Unionists and Orangemen was held under the auspices of Sir Edward Carson at Belfast (September 25, 1911). Its object was to concert a "plan of campaign" against Home Rule, and its outcome was the drawing up of a Constitution for the Provisional Government of Ulster. This procedure was advocated and justified

<sup>1</sup> *Reynolds's Newspaper*, January 8, 1911.



## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

by Sir Edward Carson on the ground that "the people of Ulster, if let loose without organization, might, in a foolish moment, find themselves in a condition of antagonism and grip with their foes": a curious euphemism for Civil War. The proposed Constitution was thus represented as a safeguard for "the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of bloodshed."

This was the opening chapter in what, a year later, I described as the "complete Grammar of Anarchy."<sup>1</sup>

A further stage was reached when Mr. Bonar Law, on behalf of the British Unionists, gave in their adhesion to the Carson policy. On Easter Tuesday, 1912 (April 9), the two Leaders stood side by side on the platform at a demonstration at Belfast, attended by from 80,000 to 100,000 drilled men assembled in military order. Mr. Law aroused their enthusiasm by declaring that, even if both parties in Great Britain were committed to Home Rule, Ulster would still resist. And the whole assembly repeated after Sir Edward Carson their new formula: "We will never, in any circumstances, submit to Home Rule."

On the First Reading of the Bill in the House of Commons, in 1912, Mr. Bonar Law described this gathering as the "expression of the soul of a people," who were ready, "in what they believe to be the cause of justice and liberty, to lay down their lives." And a few weeks later, in the Committee stage (June 18), he went a step farther. "The Government," he said, "know that if Ulster does resist by force there are stronger influences than parliamentary majorities. They know that in that case no Government would dare to use their troops to drive them out. They

<sup>1</sup> At Ladybank (October 5, 1912).

## ULSTER

know, as a matter of fact, that the Government which gave the order to employ troops for that purpose would run a greater risk of being lynched in London than the loyalists of Ulster would run of being shot in Belfast."

This was followed up, at a Unionist demonstration at Blenheim on July 27, when Mr. Bonar Law described the Government "as a Revolutionary Committee which had seized by fraud upon despotic power. In our opposition to them we shall not be guided by the considerations, we shall not be restrained by the bonds, which would influence us in an ordinary political struggle. We shall use any means, whatever means seem to us likely to be most effective. . . .

"I say now, with a full sense of the responsibility which attaches to my position, that if the attempt be made under present conditions, I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster will go in which I shall not be ready to support them, and in which they will not be supported by the overwhelming majority of the British people."

These utterances, unparalleled in the language of any responsible statesman within living memory, naturally gave rise to a debate in the House of Commons (July 31), when Mr. Law declared that he was glad to have an opportunity of repeating the words which he had used at Blenheim.

"I have been carefully considering them for a long time, and I did what I rarely do, I actually wrote down the words I used. . . . I have seen no sign that there is a member of the Party who does not endorse every word I say."

My comment was that it was a "declaration of war against Constitutional Government."

In the following September, Sir Edward Carson,

## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

accompanied by Mr. F. E. Smith, made a triumphal tour through the section of Ulster where the movement had been most thoroughly organized. There had been already importation of arms into the Orange counties and widespread drilling and training. He was received with military honours. At Portadown (September 25) on his appearance, the Union Jack was dipped; he took the salute of a guard of honour; and there were even ambulance wagons with hospital nurses. The pilgrimage was a prelude to the rite, which was duly celebrated at Belfast on September 28 ("Ulster Day"), of promulgating the "Solemn Covenant" which bound its signatories (Sir Edward Carson being the first) to refuse to recognize the authority of an Irish Parliament.

## CHAPTER V

### ULSTER (II)

IT is at this point that the question arises whether the Government were right in not at once putting the Criminal Law in motion against Sir Edward Carson and his associates. Mr. Spender, whose judgment is entitled to great respect, has recently placed on record his considered opinion that we were wrong.<sup>1</sup>

“ The question (he writes) whether the Government could sustain its authority . . . should, I think, have been tested at the moment of challenge, for the granting of impunity to a prolonged threat of armed resistance and open preparation for it is deeply demoralizing.” Of the truth of this last proposition there can be no doubt. Nor can there be much question that a case could have been made out—Sir Edward Carson himself never denied it—for bringing the proceedings in Ireland within the scope of the Criminal Law. The speeches, and the action taken upon them, were no longer—to quote language which I had used of Mr. Balfour twenty years before—“ the conditional incitements of an academic anarchist.” As a rule, when people take to vapouring on the platform about the necessity of flouting Parliament, and resorting to “ direct action,” most sensible statesmen in these days would agree that they are best left alone. But here there was more than violent rhetoric; there was abundant evidence of preparation being made for organized and forcible resistance to the law. Indeed, in the

<sup>1</sup> “ The Public Life,” I, p. 111.

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autumn of 1913, a "Provisional Government" was actually formed in Belfast, and the "Ulster Volunteer Force," with an old Anglo-Indian General who had been appointed "Commander-in-Chief" at its head, was "reviewed" in the presence of Sir Edward Carson, who delivered to them an animated and stimulating address.

It had even been hinted that the British Army could not be relied on in the emergency of Civil War,<sup>1</sup> and not only responsible British Unionists like Lord Selborne and Lord Derby, but Sir Edward Carson himself, felt bound to repudiate the suggestion. Speaking at Manchester (December 3, 1913), he used this language:

"They tell us sometimes we are trying to tamper with the Army. It is a foul lie. . . . I have said before and say now . . . that it would be a bad day for the country if the Army, under any circumstances, were to refuse to obey the lawful orders of those who are put in command over them. Of course they must. But it is for that very reason that statesmen and politicians ought to look ahead. It is for that very reason that statesmen and politicians ought to know to what their acts lead."

This was sound doctrine, but undoubtedly during this campaign the seed had already been sown which germinated in the Curragh incident of the following year.

If, in view of all this, the Government abstained from criminal proceedings, it was neither from timidity nor from dilatoriness. Their adverse judgment, which,

<sup>1</sup> As, for instance, in a speech of Mr. Bonar Law's at Dublin (Nov. 28, 1913), when he said, referring to the precedent of James II: "In order to carry out his despotic intention the King had the largest paid Army which had ever been seen in England. What happened? There was no Civil War. There was a Revolution and the King disappeared. Why? Because his own Army refused to fight for him."

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so far as I remember, was quite unanimous and never wavered, was based upon grounds of high policy, and I have never doubted that the course actually pursued, though it lent itself to every kind of cavil, was the wisest that could in the circumstances have been taken.

In the first place, it is never wise to set on foot the machinery of a State prosecution, if its failure to secure a conviction is a foregone conclusion. It would not have been at all difficult to draw up an indictment, or a series of alternative indictments, in respect of what had been said and done in Ireland. The charge or charges could have been framed so as to be technically water-tight, and they could have been proved up to the hilt by clear, and indeed, uncontroverted evidence. But the guilt or innocence of the accused would have ultimately had to be determined by a Jury, and, as the days of jury-packing were happily over, it was as certain as any of the sequences of nature that no Irish Jury would convict. The utmost that could be hoped for was a disagreement; an abortive result, which would have done nothing to vindicate the authority of the law.

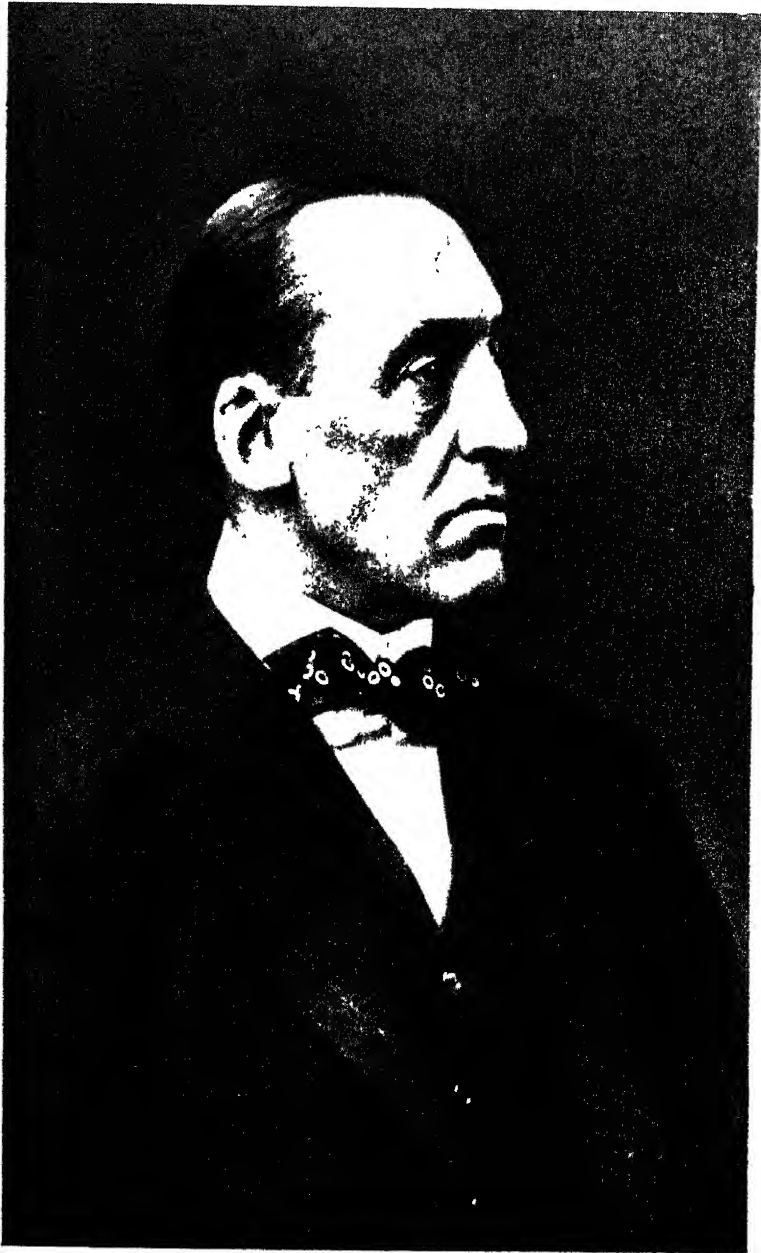
This was in itself a fatal objection to the institution of criminal proceedings, even if it had not been reinforced by other grave considerations. We were working, through all these eventful years, in close co-operation and substantial harmony with the Leaders of the Nationalist Party. There was not, as yet, the faintest indication that they had lost their hold on the allegiance of the vast majority of their fellow countrymen. I myself went to Dublin (July 18, 1912)—the first British Prime Minister to visit Ireland—and I had abundant evidence not only of the unbroken enthusiasm of the people for Home Rule, but of their unabated confidence in Mr. Redmond and his

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colleagues, of whom the most influential at that time were Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin. They were, throughout, insistent in deprecating resort to criminal proceedings against the Carsonites, on the ground that such a step could do no good, and that it would inevitably secure for the victims an invaluable and much-coveted place in the annals of Irish martyrology.

There was a further argument which carried even greater weight. It was obviously of capital importance that, if it were possible, the birth of the new State should be under the star of Peace. Nothing, therefore, was more remote from our hopes or intentions than to take any step that was not absolutely forced upon us in the "Coercion" of the Ulster minority. We could give no countenance to any claim on their part, moral or constitutional, to defeat or frustrate the aspirations, endorsed by the Imperial Parliament, of the vast majority of the Irish people. But we appealed to them again and again in the course of the debates to formulate some plan which would meet their special case, without denying or delaying the claim of the majority.<sup>1</sup> I shall deal in the following Chapter with the attempts which were made after the Prorogation of Parliament in August 1913, to obtain a settlement by consent. For the moment, it is enough to say that any overtures in that direction, either upon the one side or the other, would have been hopeless from the first in the atmosphere which would have been created either by a successful or an unsuccessful resort to the Criminal Law.

<sup>1</sup> For confirmation of this, see my speech in the House of Commons on the question that Clause I stand part of the Bill (July 3, 1912); and Lord Crewe's in the House of Lords on the Second Reading (Jan. 27, 1913).



*Portrait of Lord Carson*

LORD CARSON.





## CHAPTER VI

### ULSTER (III)

**I**N a speech to my constituents at Ladybank, October 25, 1913, I publicly invited the Unionist leaders to an interchange of views and suggestions—free, frank, and without prejudice.

Mr. Redmond, on behalf of the Nationalists, said shortly afterwards, at Newcastle (November 14, 1913): "It would be worth paying a big price to obtain a settlement by consent. There is no demand that we are not ready to consider carefully, so long as it is consistent with the principle of settlement based upon the national self-government of Ireland."

Mr. Bonar Law's reply is to be found in speeches which he made at Wallsend (October 29) and at Norwich (November 13). It was to the effect that if the Government had any proposals to make, he and his friends would consider them "carefully, honestly, and with sole regard not to the interests of a party, but to the welfare of the nation." "But," he added, "though I say that, I feel more strongly than ever that the plain, clear duty of the Government is to submit their proposals, either at a General Election or by means of a Referendum, to the judgment of the people."

My rejoinder was given at Leeds (November 27):

"There is no ground for demanding a General Election. It is neither constitutionally necessary nor

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practically expedient. . . . I have no reason to complain of the spirit in which the invitation was received by, among others, the responsible leaders of the Opposition. . . . It shall not be said, either now or hereafter, that my hand has closed any door which opens upon a reasonable and honourable way of peace."

Mr. Law, however, detected, in the tone and some of the expressions of this speech, indications that all that was intended by Ministers was some illusory concession. Accordingly, speaking the next day (November 28) at Dublin, he said :

"When we declared our readiness to consider any proposal he liked to make, I thought Mr. Asquith not only desired a settlement—I am sure he does—but that he had hopes of securing it. After his speech last night I think so no longer. I think the Prime Minister's speech at Leeds means that Mr. Redmond has given his orders, and that Mr. Asquith is not prepared to disobey them, or is determined to wait and see."

There was, in the course of the autumn, much platform-speaking on the subject, and some conversations took place under the seal of confidence between leading men, but no substantial progress in the direction of accommodation was made.

The situation at the beginning of 1914 was described in the King's Speech, at the opening of the new Session (February 10, 1914), in the following terms :

"I regret that the efforts which have been made to arrive at a solution, by agreement, of the problems connected with the Government of Ireland have, so far, not succeeded. In a matter in which the hopes and fears of so many of my subjects are keenly concerned,

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and which, unless handled now with foresight, judgment, and in the spirit of mutual concession, threatens grave future difficulties, it is my most earnest wish that the good-will and co-operation of men of all parties and creeds may heal dissension and lay the foundations of a lasting settlement."

It was now the third, and under the Parliament Act the final, Session of the Home Rule Bill. In moving the Second Reading (March 9) I dealt fully with the various expedients which had been suggested to or by Ministers, in the course of their deliberations, to meet the case of Ulster without prejudice to the claims of the rest of Ireland.

I said that we had tried to meet the Ulster difficulty in three different ways. The plan which commended itself very much to my own judgment was, in the name given to it by Sir Edward Grey, "Home Rule within Home Rule." It was the essence of this proposal that, as regards administration, Statutory Ulster should be, until the Imperial Parliament otherwise decided, entirely exempt from the Executive authority of the Irish Parliament. I parted from it with regret and with reluctance, but it had not commended itself to any of the parties concerned.

The second suggestion was, that the whole of Ireland should be in the first instance included in the Bill; but that an option, after the lapse of a certain time, should be offered to Ulster counties to remove themselves from the jurisdiction of the Irish Legislature and Executive. This again had not proved an acceptable solution.

The third road was that of Exclusion, and it was upon this line that the Government now asked Parliament to proceed, not as a solution, but as an expedient which might pave the way in time for a final settlement.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

The proposal was that any Ulster county might, by a vote of the majority of its Parliamentary electors, stand out of the whole operation of the Bill for six years. Before Inclusion could become operative, we calculated that there must be two General Elections in Great Britain, and consequently the people would be able to reach a decision with experience of the actual working of the Parliament in Dublin.

Mr. Redmond, on behalf of the Nationalists, gave a reluctant assent to the Government compromise. "In my view," he said, "the Prime Minister has gone to the very extremest limits of concession. If these proposals of the Government be frankly accepted as the basis of agreement and peace, then we, on our side, are prepared to accept them in the same spirit."

Its reception, however, on the part of the Opposition was, to say the least, far from promising.

"If the Government," said Mr. Bonar Law, "adhere to the condition that at the end of six years the counties have to come in, I really cannot see how it is possible that the proposals can be accepted."

Sir Edward Carson struck a more vehement and defiant note: "We do not," said he, "want sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years. . . . I know very well that the motto of every Government—it is pasted outside every Government Department—is 'Peace in our time, O Lord!' . . . If you take your time limit away, I would feel it my duty to go over to Ulster and to call a Convention, but with this time limit in, and Ulster ready, as I believe, for any exigency at the present moment, I shall not go to Ulster."

Mr. Churchill, a few days later (March 14) at Bradford, dealt with the situation in an outspoken and characteristic fashion. He described Sir Edward

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Carson's Convention as "a self-elected body, composed of persons who, to put it plainly, are engaged in a treasonable conspiracy. This Convention is graciously to consider the matter while the Imperial Parliament stands on tiptoe outside the door waiting for the verdict."

Mr. Churchill went on :

"As long as it affects working men in England or Nationalist peasants in Ireland, there is no measure of military force which the Tory Party will not readily employ. They denounce all violence except their own. They uphold all law except the law they choose to break. They always welcome the application of force to others. But they themselves are to remain immune. They are to select from the Statute Book the laws they will obey and the laws they will resist.

"If Ulster seeks peace and fair play she can find it. She knows where to find it. If Ulstermen extend the hand of friendship, it will be clasped by Liberals and by their Nationalist countrymen, in all good faith and in all good will ; but if there is no wish for peace ; if every concession that is made is spurned and exploited ; if every effort to meet their views is only to be used as a means of breaking down Home Rule, and of barring the way to the rest of Ireland ; if Ulster is to become a tool in party calculations ; if the civil and parliamentary systems under which we have dwelt so long, and our fathers before us, are to be brought to the rude challenge of force ; if the Government and the Parliament of this great country and greater Empire are to be exposed to menace and brutality ; if all the loose, wanton, and reckless chatter we have been forced to listen to these many months is in the end to disclose a sinister and revolutionary purpose ; then I can only say to you : ' Let

## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

us go forward together and put these grave matters to the proof ! ' ' "

I am glad to be able to cull this vivid passage from the slowly withering rhetoric of a now half-forgotten controversy, as a proof, if proof were needed, that the twentieth century can hold its own with its predecessors in an oratorical competition.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CURRAGH INCIDENT

THE Home Rule Bill was read a Second time in the Third successive session on April 6, 1914.

In the meanwhile a new electrical disturbance had been introduced into the unsettled political atmosphere by what was known at the time as the "Curragh Incident." The Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, Sir Arthur Paget, having received instructions in the middle of March to take the necessary precautionary steps to safeguard the depots in some parts of Ulster, assembled his Brigadiers for a Conference. He told them what his orders were, expressed his apprehension that their execution might lead to opposition from organized bodies of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and desired to know what in that event were the intentions of his officers. Some of the officers interpreted the question in a wider sense than was intended, and one of the most distinguished of them, General Hubert Gough, commanding the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, stated that, if their duty involved the initiation of active operations against Ulster, he and others in his Brigade would prefer to be dismissed.

The officers in question, or some of them, were thereupon ordered to report themselves to the Adjutant-General in London. They were told that all that was demanded by the Army Council was that, if and when orders should be given, they would be ready to do the duty which lay upon all persons in the military service of the Crown: to proceed to any part of Ireland,



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either for the protection of Government property, or for the assistance of the civil power in the maintenance of order and the preservation of peace.

The officers expressed their willingness to discharge these duties, and, with the approval of Sir A. Paget, they were ordered to rejoin their units in Ireland.

A Memorandum was drawn up and carefully revised by the Cabinet, and when (in substance) published shortly afterwards, as an Army Order, met with general acceptance. It was in the following terms :

“ 1. No officer or soldier should in future be questioned by his superior officer as to the attitude he will adopt, or as to his action, in the event of his being required to obey orders dependent on future or hypothetical contingencies.

“ 2. An officer or soldier is forbidden in future to ask for assurances as to orders which he may be required to obey.

“ 3. In particular, it is the duty of every officer and soldier to obey all lawful commands given to them through the proper channel, either for the safeguarding of public property, or the support of the civil power in the ordinary execution of its duty, or for the protection of the lives and property of the inhabitants in the case of disturbance of the peace.”

Unfortunately, through a misunderstanding, for which no one was to blame, in answer to a request from General Gough (of which the Cabinet had no knowledge) that it might be made clear whether, if the Home Rule Bill became law, the officers would be called upon to enforce it under the expression “ maintaining law and order,” the Secretary of State, Colonel Seely, had added, in the copy of the Cabinet Memorandum which he sent to the General, two paragraphs,

## *THE CURRAGH INCIDENT*

one of which stated that His Majesty's Government had no intention of taking advantage of the right (to use the forces of the Crown) "to crush political opposition to the policy or principles of the Home Rule Bill." Sir John French, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Sir Spencer Ewart, the Adjutant-General, initialled the Secretary of State's addition.

When, later in the day, the document so amplified was brought to me, I at once took exception to the added paragraphs. I held, as did my colleagues, that if it was not right to ask an officer what he would do in a hypothetical contingency, still less could it be right for an officer to ask the Government to give him any such assurance. General Gough was accordingly informed that the two added paragraphs were not to be considered as operative.

Colonel Seely, Sir John French and Sir Spencer Ewart felt it their duty to resign their offices, not from any difference between their view and that of the Government: the two latter because they had initialled the cancelled part of the Memorandum; and Colonel Seely, in order (as he stated in the House of Commons) "that it might not even appear that a Minister of the Crown had made a bargain with servants of the Crown as to the terms of their service."

It is not necessary to say that Colonel Seely acted throughout with scrupulous regard, not only to the rules of honour, but to the instincts of chivalry.

But a dangerous controversy had been raised, both inside the House of Commons and in the country. There was a serious risk of a struggle, more or less on party lines, upon the issue of "The Army versus Parliament."

In the circumstances, I felt it right to add to my other burdens the duties of Secretary of State for War.

## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

The King handed me the Seals on March 30, and as in my own opinion and that of my legal advisers (though I took no salary) I thereby vacated my seat, I at once appealed to my constituents for re-election.

I was not opposed, and made only a single speech in Fife, at Ladybank on April 4.

I there cited and endorsed the doctrine laid down by the elder Pitt in the House of Commons in 1745 :

“ The right of inquiring what measures may conduce to the advantage and security of the public belongs not to the Army, but to this House. To this House belongs the power of constituting the Army, or of advising His Majesty with regard to its constitution. Our armies have no better right to determine for themselves than any other body of men, nor are we to suffer them to prescribe laws to the Legislature, or to govern those by whose authority they subsist.”

“ The Army,” I added, “ will hear nothing of politics from me, and in return I expect to hear nothing of politics from the Army.”

This expectation was fulfilled. The tension which had been created was at once relaxed, and during my short tenure of the War Office my relations with the military authorities, and with those under their control, were throughout of complete cordiality and mutual confidence.

It was some time, however, before the ground-swell subsided in the House of Commons. When I got back there, I was bombarded daily with questions about the “ Plot,” on some days amounting to 100 in number ; for the more ingenious spirits in the Opposition had started a question factory, with an outside expert in charge, until, at last, I was compelled to announce that I should refuse to answer any more. The ferment,

## *THE CURRAGH INCIDENT*

which had become largely artificial, rapidly cooled down.

I was able, thanks to an admirable and most efficient Secretariat—I may mention, in particular, Mr. Creedy (now Sir Herbert Creedy, Permanent Under-Secretary), the late General Anthony Henley, and Mr. Eric Drummond (now Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary-General of the League of Nations)—to keep pace with the work of the War Office, and I believe that nothing that required my personal decision was ever in arrear. Having sat for the best part of eight years in the Chair of the Committee of Imperial Defence, I was familiar with the larger problems of strategy and general military policy ; but I realized more clearly than ever, when I came to grapple with the daily routine of detail, how immeasurable was the debt owed by the Service to Lord Haldane—the greatest Administrator who has presided over it since the days of Cardwell. I became keenly interested in the work, and if the War had not broken out I should have retained the office for another year, in the hope of carrying out certain administrative developments which seemed to me to be ripe.

After this necessary digression, I complete in the next Chapter the narrative of our dealings with the Ulster problem.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ULSTER (IV)

**A**FTER the Second Reading—for the third time—of the Home Rule Bill, I intimated (May 12) that the Government would introduce an Amending Bill unless, as we hoped, a settlement by agreement could meanwhile be attained. That hope being again frustrated and the Home Rule Bill having been read a third time in the House of Commons, the Amending Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on June 23. It embodied the proposal that any Ulster County should be entitled to vote itself out of Home Rule for six years.

The Second Reading was passed (by 273 to 10), but in Committee the House of Lords transformed it into a Bill to exclude the whole of Ulster without any time limit; a proposal which every one knew that neither the Nationalists nor the majority of the House of Commons could possibly be brought to entertain. In this unacceptable form it was brought down to the House of Commons on July 14.

Meanwhile, on June 28, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been murdered at Serajevo. The storm clouds were gathering in the international sky.

In a situation of such gravity it was urgent that no step should be left unattempted to reconcile our domestic dissensions. His Majesty, acting upon the advice of His Ministers, summoned representatives of the British and Irish parties to a Conference at Buckingham Palace “with the object of

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discussing outstanding issues in relation to the problem of Irish Government.”

The composition of the Conference was as follows :

Chairman	.	.	.	The Speaker.
Government	.	.	.	{Mr. Asquith. Mr. Lloyd George.
Opposition	.	.	.	{Lord Lansdowne. Mr. Bonar Law.
Irish Nationalists	.	.	.	{Mr. John Redmond. Mr. Dillon.
Ulster Unionists	.	.	.	{Sir Edward Carson. Captain J. Craig.

The King opened the proceedings on July 21, with a short Address, in the course of which he said :

“ My intervention at this moment may be regarded as a new departure. But the exceptional circumstances under which you are brought together justify my action. For months we have watched with deep misgivings the course of events in Ireland. The trend has been surely and steadily towards an appeal to force, and to-day the cry of Civil War is on the lips of the most responsible and sober-minded of My People.

“ We have in the past endeavoured to act as a civilizing example in the world, and to Me it is unthinkable, as it must be to you, that we should be brought to the brink of fratricidal strife upon issues apparently so capable of adjustment as those which you are now asked to consider, if handled in a spirit of generous compromise. . . .

“ You represent in one form or another the vast majority of My subjects at home. . . . You also have a deep interest in My Dominions Oversea, who are

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scarcely less concerned in a prompt and friendly settlement of this question.

"I regard you then, in this matter, as Trustees for the honour and peace of all.

"Your responsibilities are indeed great. The time is short. You will, I know, employ it to the fullest advantage, and be patient, earnest and conciliatory in view of the magnitude of the interests at stake. I pray that God, in His infinite wisdom, may guide your deliberations, so that they may result in the joy of peace and honourable settlement."

This Address was the subject of somewhat critical interrogation in the House of Commons. I stated, in reply to questions (July 22), that "the Speech delivered by the King was sent to me in the ordinary way by His Majesty the day before, and I take the whole responsibility for it. The King left it to the discretion of the Conference to determine whether the Speech should be published, and the Conference decided unanimously in favour of publication."

In reply to a further inquiry, the next day, as to the passage in the speech which referred to the "cry of Civil War," I said :

"In my understanding the sentence in question was not intended, and ought not to be construed, as saying more than what is obviously true: that the apprehension of Civil strife has been widely entertained and expressed by responsible and sober-minded persons ; among whom I may perhaps include myself."

The Conference held four meetings at Buckingham Palace on July 21, 22, 23 and 24, the Speaker being on each occasion in the Chair. The discussions were carried on in a courteous and friendly spirit, and with a real desire to find a way to agreement. They turned entirely on the geographical demarcation of

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the area to be excluded, temporarily or permanently, from the operation of the Home Rule Bill. There was a debatable territory, particularly in the two counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone, where the racial and religious intermixture presented exceptionally intricate difficulties. I confess that I hoped to the last that they might be overcome; but it was not to be. On July 24 it was my painful duty to communicate to the House of Commons the Speaker's report :

“ The possibility of defining an area to be excluded from the operation of the Government of Ireland Bill was considered. The Conference being unable to agree, either in principle or in detail, upon such an area, brought its meetings to a conclusion.—JAMES W. LOWTHER.”

On the same day (July 24) the Government were informed of the terms of the Ultimatum which Austria had delivered to Serbia.

The Amending Bill was down for Second Reading in the House of Commons on July 30. I saw Mr. Bonar Law privately on the morning of that day, and he agreed with me that, in view of the international situation, its consideration must be put off. Accordingly, when the House met in the afternoon I moved its postponement, and in doing so I used the following sentences :

“ We are met to-day under conditions of gravity which are almost unparalleled in the experience of every one of us. Issues of peace and war are hanging in the balance, and with them the risk of a catastrophe of which it is impossible to measure either the dimensions or the effects. In these circumstances it is of vital importance in the interest of the whole world that this country, which has no interests of its own directly at stake, should present a united front, and



be able to speak and act with the authority of an undivided nation. If we were to proceed to-day with the first Order on the paper, we should inevitably, unless the debate was conducted in an artificial tone, be involved in acute controversy in regard to domestic differences, whose importance to ourselves no one here, in any quarter of the House, is disposed to disparage or belittle. I need not say more than that such a use of our time at such a moment might have injurious and lastingly injurious effects upon the international situation."

The Leader of the Opposition expressed his concurrence, and the further consideration of the Bill was indefinitely postponed.

Little more than a week later we were at war.

The Home Rule Bill and the Welsh Church Bill, under the provisions of the Parliament Act, received the Royal Assent on September 18. They were accompanied by a Suspensory Act, which in effect suspended their operations until the end of the War. I gave, further, on behalf of the Government, a pledge that the Home Rule Bill "should not come into operation until Parliament should have the fullest opportunity by an Amending Bill of altering, modifying or qualifying its provisions in such a way as to secure at any rate the general consent both of Ireland and the United Kingdom." (House of Commons, September 15, 1914.)

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*PART VI*

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## CHAPTER I

### PARLIAMENT: PARTY CHANGES

**D**URING the fifty years 1868-1918, most of which have been covered by the survey in this book, there were eleven Parliaments. If we omit the second Parliament elected in 1910, which was prolonged to an abnormal duration by the War, their average term of life was about 4 years. But for the two exceptionally short ones, elected in November, 1885, and January, 1910, respectively, neither of which lasted for a year, the average would work out at nearer 5 years than 4; and four of them (1868, 1874, 1886, and 1900) approached or even exceeded 6 years. The two substantial enlargements in the number of the Electorate made, the one in 1867-8 and the other in 1884-5, and the introduction of Secret Voting in 1872, do not seem to have had any appreciable effect on the stability of Administrations or the duration of Parliaments.

At the successive General Elections, which substituted a new for an old House of Commons, the law of the "swing of the pendulum" operated for the most part almost automatically. The chief apparent exception was due to the raising of the Home Rule issue by Mr. Gladstone in 1886. Except for the three years between 1892 and 1895, when a Liberal Government lived almost from day to day on a composite and precarious majority, it may be said that the Irish controversy kept the Liberal Party out of power for the best part of twenty years. This was, in part at

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any rate, the result of a chapter of accidents. The confident predictions of all the political weather gaugers, as late as the autumn of 1890, gave the Liberals at the next election a substantial working majority; but the sudden emergence of the Parnell Scandal, with its disintegrating effects upon the Home Rule Party, both in Ireland and Great Britain, made havoc of the calculations of the prophets. The "Khaki" Election of 1900, which kept the Unionist Government in office, was, as the events of the next few years showed, of the nature of what is called in the House of Commons a "Snap Division." A Liberal majority was therefore overdue at the beginning of 1906, though it was, no doubt, swollen to unprecedented and unnatural dimensions by the maladroitness with which the Fiscal issue had been both raised and handled.

In the party composition of the House of Commons there was, of course, in the earlier years, a corresponding uniformity of change.<sup>1</sup> The Two-Party system received a blow at the hands of Mr. Parnell. He was largely responsible, as we have seen, for the overthrow of the Gladstone Government in the summer of 1885, and for the Liberal electoral reverses in the urban constituencies of England in the ensuing autumn. When he came back to Westminster, in January, 1886, with a serried array of 86 drilled and disciplined followers, the orientation of the Party system was permanently upset. Later in the same Session, the Liberal Unionists swarmed off from the parent hive, and for some years, while working for the most part with the Conservatives, maintained a

<sup>1</sup> One of the most brilliant of English statesmen and political writers, who saw the birth and infancy of our Party system, George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, says in his "Political Thoughts": "Ignorance maketh most men go into a Party, and Shame keepeth them from getting out of it."

## PARLIAMENT : PARTY CHANGES

position of almost ostentatious independence. Thus for nearly ten years (1886-1895) there were four recognized Parties in the House of Commons, each with funds, Whips, and an organization, both inside and outside Parliament, of its own.

The absorption of the Liberal Unionists by the Conservatives, which became practically complete in the Parliament of 1906, though I believe that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain never changed his own designation, was preceded and accompanied by the appearance on the scene of an Independent Labour Party.

When I entered the House of Commons (1886) there was already a group of Labour Members ; most of them Trade Union Leaders from the mining districts in the North of England—Burt, Fenwick, and others ; as fine a set of men in character and political intelligence as have sat in the House in my time. They can hardly be said to have had a regular Parliamentary organization ; they had no recognized Leader or Whips ; and on almost all important issues they acted and voted with the Liberals. Two of them became Under-Secretaries in Liberal Governments : Henry Broadhurst in 1886, and Thomas Burt (who seconded my Amendment to the Address which turned out the Unionist Government) in 1892.

Two remarkable men, both known as "agitators,"<sup>1</sup> who represented new, though sharply-contrasted types, Keir Hardie and John Burns, were elected to the House of Commons in 1892. Hardie, who had no Liberal affiliations, was the real pioneer of the Parliamentary Labour Party ; for a time the older Labour Members were inclined to look at him askance. Burns, with his rare gifts and his challenging personality, pursued an independent line,

<sup>1</sup> See Note at end of Chapter.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

and ultimately, at Campbell-Bannerman's invitation, became the first Labour man to enter a Cabinet (1905).

It was in the House elected in 1906 that Labour first emerged as a separate and definitely-organized group. Ramsay MacDonald, Clynes, and Snowden were its most conspicuous new members. The group began to elect a Sessional Chairman, Hardie's successor in the post being Arthur Henderson, who had been a Liberal agent, and in 1895 was chosen as a colleague with John Morley in the candidature for Newcastle. The Parliamentary ranks of Labour were further strengthened in 1910, when they were recruited by (among other new-comers) the formidable figure of J. H. Thomas. It is, however, significant of the slowness with which new forces are formally recognized in our political life, that Labour, as such, was not invited to separate representation, either in the Constitutional Conference of 1910, or in the later one held at Buckingham Palace on the eve of the War in July, 1914.

To complete the narrative it is necessary to put on record that the Nationalists were wiped out of existence as a Parliamentary factor in 1918; that the establishment of the Irish Free State a few years later as one of the British Dominions deprived the term "Unionism" of all living significance; and that there are now in Parliament only three Parties—Conservative, Labour and Liberal.

### NOTE

#### AGITATORS AND AGITATION

The term "Agitator" seems to have been first used to describe the two representatives of the rank and file of each regiment in the Parliamentary Army,

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who (under the "Solemn Engagement of the Army," June, 1647) were to sit on the General Council of the Army. "The word," says Sir C. H. Firth, "meant simply 'Agents,' and had none of the sinister significance which modern usage has given it." None the less, the "Agitators" soon began to meddle with politics; and in "The Case of the Army Truly Stated" (October, 1647) they "demanded Manhood Suffrage, Equal Electoral Divisions, Biennial Parliaments, and by implication the Abolition of Monarchy and the House of Lords,"<sup>1</sup>—a fairly drastic programme. It appears that Manhood Suffrage was the matter which they had most at heart; it brought them into heated controversy with Cromwell and Ireton, who held that the "suffrage was a right attached to the possession of property."<sup>2</sup> The attempt to introduce representative Government into the Army, frowned upon by Cromwell and the superior officers, soon broke down,<sup>3</sup> and the experiment was never tried again.

A curious and, so far as I know, still unwritten chapter of English History would be one on Agitation. It need not go so far back as John Ball, Wat Tyler, and Jack Cade, but might start with the picturesque figure of John Lilburne, who gave so much trouble to Oliver Cromwell and his Council of State. So great was Lilburne's hold on the affections of the people that during his trial, when he conducted his own case with masterly skill, and is said to have been the first accused person in England who successfully demanded a copy of his indictment, the Government in a panic filled London with troops. "In spite of their officers, the soldiers shouted and

<sup>1</sup> See Firth, "Cromwell's Army," p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.



sounded their trumpets when they heard that Lilburne was acquitted."<sup>1</sup> John Wilkes and (after their fashion) Horne Tooke and Sir Francis Burdett kept up the succession, but Cobbett is most clearly marked out as the lineal spiritual descendant of Lilburne.

<sup>1</sup> See Sir C. Firth's interesting account of Lilburne and his popularity in "Dictionary of National Biography."

## CHAPTER II

### THIRD PARTIES

MUCH ink has been and is being spilt on the "Three Party" phase in our political development, and particularly in elucidating, or darkening, the problem of its possible or probable duration.

It is not, of course, a new phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> It was very nearly brought into being by O'Connell and his "Tail" in the long-spun-out struggle for daily existence of Lord Melbourne's Government. It became a serious actuality after the Protectionist split in the Tory Party in 1846. At the General Election of 1847 a House of Commons was returned which was composed as follows: Liberals 325, Tory Protectionists 226, Peelites 105.

The Peelites were thus, even numerically, a by no means negligible Third Party. They included at that time the greatest of living Parliamentarians in their Chief, Sir Robert Peel, and, with the exception of Disraeli, practically the whole of the intellectual and debating power of the Opposition. The feeble finance of Lord John Russell's Administration (1846-1852), the miserable show which it made over the popular outburst against "Papal Aggression," and finally the split between its two most formidable members—the Prime Minister and Lord Palmerston—

<sup>1</sup> The drawbacks of a Two-Party system from the point of view of the "middle" voter seem to have been felt in Ancient Rome: "*Dum tribuni consulesque ad se quisque omnia trahant, nihil relictum esse, virum ni Medio.*"—*Livy*, II, p. 57.

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reduced it to an impotence which almost recalled the worst days of Lord Melbourne. The Peelites suffered an irreparable loss in the sudden and premature death in 1850 of their head. At the same time the Die-Hard Conservatives who had deserted (or been deserted by) Peel, after a good deal of fumbling and with widespread repugnance, had been driven to accept the Leadership in the House of Commons of their one man of genius, Disraeli, and the electors outside believed him, with reason, to be too astute to sanction a return to the follies of Protection.

The consequence of all these concurring causes was that when the "Who? Who?" Cabinet of Derby-Disraeli slipped into office, and a few months later appealed to the country in 1852, the composition of the House of Commons was substantially changed. The figures now became Conservative, 310; Liberals, 270; Peelites, 40; the remaining 40 being largely made up of a curious and ill-compacted group of Irish who were afterwards known as the "Pope's Brass Band."

The Party who had suffered the heaviest diminution in numbers were the Peelites, but they continued for some years to come, if not to dominate, at any rate to dislocate, the Parliamentary situation. Disraeli's well-known gibe represents them as constantly putting themselves up for auction and always buying themselves in. They were not popular, and their movements were quite incalculable.<sup>1</sup> No Party was anxious for their co-operation, and yet no Party felt strong enough to do without them: for they contained, beyond question, the best speakers and the most capable administrators in Parliament. The Coalition

<sup>1</sup> A notable instance is the resignation of Gladstone, Graham, and Herbert from Lord Palmerston's new Government in 1855, only a fortnight after they had joined it.

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Government of 1853, which was responsible for the Crimean War, had at its head a Peelite Prime Minister, and among its Peelite members were Gladstone, Graham, Sidney Herbert, and Newcastle. Thus the Peelites almost balanced their Whig colleagues ; a fact which, when the comparative numerical strength of their followers in the House of Commons is remembered, is a perhaps unique illustration of what may be done by a Third Party.

The next few years witnessed the gradual extinction of the Peelites as a separate political entity, and their absorption into the Liberal ranks, which was finally accomplished by the formation of Lord Palmerston's Cabinet in 1859. It is characteristic of them that their spirit and habit of detachment seems to have persisted up to the last moment. On the Amendment to the Address moved by Lord Hartington, which turned out Lord Derby's second Government in that year, most of the Peelites voted for the Amendment, but the most eminent of them, Mr. Gladstone, went into the Government Lobby with Disraeli and his followers. Within a fortnight he had accepted the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Palmerston's new Administration.

The truth is that in the 'fifties, after it had become an acknowledged fact that Protection was not only dead but buried, it is difficult to discover any issue of principle which separated the various Parties in the State. Each of them from time to time coquetted with Parliamentary Reform in a half-hearted fashion ; a Reform Bill of sorts was part of the stock-in-trade of successive Governments, whatever their political complexion ; and the climax of unreality was reached when in 1858 Disraeli produced his " fancy franchises."

The serious subjects of contention, apart from the

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China War, and the displacement after the Mutiny of the East India Company, were matters of administration and finance, in which departments both the old Parties were badly off for competent men. Finance in particular was their weakest point. Disraeli did not profess to be more than an amateur, and describes how, when Lord Derby first offered him the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852, he demurred: "A branch of which I have no knowledge." Lord Derby replied: "You know as much as Mr. Canning did. They give you the figures."<sup>1</sup> Sir George Cornewall Lewis was the Whig financial expert, but Mr. Gladstone, who had the greatest admiration for his scholarship, judgment, and general capacity, used to make mincemeat of his Budgets.<sup>2</sup> After the death of Peel, in the sphere of Finance Gladstone exercised a supreme and unchallengeable authority.

The causes which led to the disappearance of these two historic Third Parties are no longer in operation. There are, it is true, prophets who look upon our present Party alignments as largely a survival, and as wholly precarious and provisional. It is easy on paper to split up the political forces which are now arrayed in the field into two potential camps—Moderates and Extremists—and to assume that they must contend against each other for the mastery in the battlefields of the future. It may be that such a calamity—for a calamity it would be—is in store for our British Democracy. I do not believe it to be imminent, or even foreseeable. In my judgment, the Third-Party system, despite its manifold and obvious inconveniences, has come to stay. So long as there

<sup>1</sup> Buckle, III, p. 344. Compare the account already given of Lord R. Churchill's initiation in the same office thirty years later.

<sup>2</sup> "I almost always agree with Lewis on other subjects, but in trade and finance I do not find his opinions satisfactory" (1860).—Morley, II, p. 22.

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are real and living issues—such as there are—between the three, though there may be personal shiftings and readjustments, it is better for the health of our politics that they should not be cloaked or compromised. Nothing is so demoralizing to the tone of public life, or so belittling to the stature of public men, as the atmosphere of a Coalition.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

**I**N this Chapter I deal only with the House of Commons, with which I was directly conversant for the best part of forty years.

There is no more striking illustration of the immobility of British institutions than the House of Commons. It is difficult for anyone, without an adequate equipment of historic imagination, to realize its essential continuity to-day with the House which for twenty years Walpolé manipulated by coarse expedients but with infinite dexterity; which the brothers Pelham and the rival Whig families kept in leash with an organized system of thinly-disguised corruption for another twenty or more; over which the dominating and meteoric genius of the Great Commoner hovered like a spell during a brief but glorious epoch; which sank to perhaps its lowest depth of impotence under the leadership of Lord North; which rose again in the long reign of the younger Pitt to the splendours of the classic age of British oratory; which, after his death, suffered a long and tame eclipse, sparsely and sporadically lighted up by the Cannings and the Broughams and the Romillys; which, since the Reform of 1832, has numbered among the potent figures to whom it has given its homage men so diverse in genius and accomplishment as Peel and Russell, Palmerston and Bright, Disraeli and Gladstone. Yet which of our institutions has ostensibly been so much modified and transformed, or

## THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

has undergone such a revolution in the antecedents and qualifications of those who compose it ?<sup>1</sup>

It has witnessed during the last hundred years the abolition of the pocket boroughs, the "nurseries of young genius," the safe refuges of great men under a temporary cloud of electoral misfortune; the enfranchisement step by step of the middle classes, and the urban and rural proletariat; the introduction of secret voting; even the establishment of payment of members—a series of "death-knells" to our Ancient Constitution, each one of which in turn has been confidently predicted to presage the speedy and inevitable extinction of its greatness. Upon that forecast at one or another of its stages, men so widely apart in training and in intellectual competence as Croker and Bagehot would have been at one. And yet there it is; and it would almost seem as if it might inscribe over its portals Queen Elizabeth's motto, *Semper eadem*.

If the shades of Bubb Dodington or George Selwyn, or of the most illustrious of its silent members, Edward Gibbon, could revisit it, they would soon find themselves at home. They would quickly begin to breathe again the familiar atmosphere; and even in the externals of ritual and practice they would recognize the Speaker in his robes, the Mace on the Table, the ceremonious obeisance to the Chair of Members entering or leaving the Chamber, the occasional apparition of Black Rod knocking at the door, bowing his way up the floor, and repeating the venerable formula which invites the House to attend in another place the King or his Commissioners.

<sup>1</sup> Lady Cowper writes to a correspondent in 1826: "People think this new Parliament will be a curious one. There are three stockbrokers in it; which was never the case with one before."—"Lady Palmerston and Her Times," I, p. 131.



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Nor is the essential identity of the House confined to, or indeed dependent upon, the maintenance of these consecrated forms.

Macaulay's famous description of it when he was still a young Member is worth recalling: "It is the most peculiar audience in the world. I should say that a man's being a good writer, a good orator at the Bar, a good mob-orator, or a good orator in debating clubs, was rather a reason for expecting him to fail than for expecting him to succeed in the House of Commons. A place where Walpole succeeded and Addison failed; where Dundas succeeded and Burke failed; where Peel now succeeds and where Mackintosh fails; where Erskine and Scarlett were dinner bells; where Lawrence and Jekyll, the two wittiest men, or nearly so, of their time were thought bores, is surely a very strange place. And yet I feel the whole character of the place growing upon me. I begin to like what others about me like, and to disapprove what they disapprove. Canning used to say that the House, as a body, had better taste than the man of best taste in it, and I am very much inclined to think that Canning was right."<sup>1</sup>

This was written nearly a hundred years ago, but it is as true to-day as it was then. The corporate judgment on the merits and demerits of its Members, of an Assembly always divided and often inflamed by party prepossessions and prejudices, is a remarkable and perhaps a unique phenomenon. The instinct of the House, though commonly right, is not, of course,

<sup>1</sup> In an equally characteristic passage written much later, he enlarges on the paradox that "parliamentary government is government by speaking," and after citing the cases of Charles Townshend and Windham, he adds: "It was a pleasure to listen to those accomplished and ingenious Orators. But in a perilous crisis they would be found inferiors in all the qualifications of Rulers to such a man as Oliver Cromwell, who talked nonsense, or as William the Silent, who did not talk at all."—(*See* Jennings's "Anecdotal History of the British Parliament," p. 305.)

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unerring ; it has had undeserving favourites, and has refused its ear to men who ought to have commanded its respectful attention. Lord Castlereagh<sup>1</sup> belonged to the former class ; Burke and Mackintosh to the latter. There have been similar instances, but none that I can recall so conspicuous, in our own time. Equally characteristic of what may be called the corporate conscience of the House is the rapid subsidence of temper and ill-feeling after the most tumultuous and even outrageous scenes—such, for instance, as the fracas described in a previous page over the “ Guillotine ” in 1893 ; or the noisy escapade during one of the crises of the Home Rule Bill, when a Member went so far as to throw a book at a Minister.

There can be no doubt that the “ manners ” of the House are much better than they were in pre-democratic days. The “ scenes,” of which the descriptive reporters make so much, are very mild affairs compared with the demonstrations that used to be of frequent occurrence. Matters were, perhaps, at their worst in the years immediately succeeding the passing of the Reform Act in 1832, although Brougham had already compared the House to a *menagerie*. An anonymous book entitled “ Random Recollections of the House of Commons from 1830 to 1835,” by “ One of No Party ” (London : Smith, Elder & Co., 1836), gives some vivid pictures of the style of invective and the methods of interruption which were then not uncommon. Take, for instance, the close, after indescribable tumult, of a wordy duel between

<sup>1</sup> Brougham says of Castlereagh that “ his diction set all imitation, perhaps all description, at defiance.” Lord Russell recalls an occasion when, “ after speaking for an hour and a half tediously and confusedly,” he declared, “ I have now proved that the Tower of London is a Common Law principle.” Yet the coolness and intrepidity with which “ he exposed himself unabashed to the most critical audience in the world ” seem to have endeared him to the House.—(Jennings, pp. 187-8.)

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O'Connell (whose bludgeon no one else could wield) and Mr. Shaw, a champion of the Irish Protestants, on the subject of a grant to Maynooth.

Mr. Shaw, still labouring under great excitement, said: "The hon. member has charged me with being actuated by a spiritual ferocity, but my ferocity is not of that description which takes for its symbol a death's head and crossbones."

Mr. O'Connell (addressing himself to Mr. Shaw personally, and not to the Chairman): "Yours is a calf's head and jaw-bones."<sup>1</sup>

The anonymous writer proceeds to describe a number of "scenes"; one may suffice as a specimen. "An honourable Member whose name I suppress, rose amidst the most tremendous uproar to address the House.

" 'I rise, Sir' (ironical cheers, mingled with all sorts of zoological sounds), 'for the purpose of stating that I have' (Oh! oh! bah! and sounds resembling the bleating of a sheep.) 'Hon. gentlemen may endeavour to put me down by their unmannerly interruptions, but I have a duty to perform to my con——' (Ironical laughter, loud coughing, sneezing and yawning extended to an incredible length.) 'I tell honourable gentlemen who choose to conduct themselves in such a way that I am not to be put down by——' (Groans, coughs, sneezings, hems, and various animal sounds, some of which closely imitated the yelping of a dog and the squeaking of a pig.) 'I appeal——' (Cock-e-leeri-o-co! The imitation in this case of the crowing of a cock was so remarkably good that not even the most staid and orderly members in the House could

<sup>1</sup> "Random Recollections of the House of Commons," p. 72. Happily such interchanges, then as now, do not appear to have affected personal relations. "Some nights afterwards both gentlemen were seen walking arm-in-arm up Parliament Street on their way home."—(*Ibid.*, p. 67.)

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preserve their gravity.)<sup>1</sup> 'I say, Sir, this is most unbecoming conduct on the part of an assembly calling itself,' etc. (Bow-wow-wow, and bursts of laughter. Mew-mew, and renewed laughter.) 'Sir, I claim the protection of the Chair.'

"The Speaker here again rose and called out, 'Order, Order!' in a loud and angry tone, on which the uproar in some measure subsided."<sup>2</sup>

From Trevelyan's "Macaulay" I take the account of another scene. Macaulay, who had only recently returned from India, records his impressions of a sitting in June, 1839: "I have never seen such unseemly demeanour, or heard such scurrilous language in Parliament. Lord Norreys was whistling and making all sorts of noises. . . . O'Connell was so rudely interrupted that he used the expression, 'beastly bellowsings.' . . . A short and most amusing scene passed between O'Connell and Lord Maidstone. 'If,' said Lord Maidstone, 'the word beastly is retracted, I shall be satisfied.'

" 'I do not care whether the noble lord be satisfied or not.'

" 'I wish you would give me satisfaction.'

" 'I advise the noble lord to carry his liquor meekly.'

"At last the tumult ended from absolute physical weakness. It was past one, and the steady bellowsers of the Opposition had been howling from six o'clock with little interruption."<sup>3</sup>

I have given a number of illustrations in the course of the preceding pages of the various phases of Parliamentary oratory during the last fifty years. There

<sup>1</sup> A similar scene is described in S. Warren's once popular novel, "Ten Thousand a Year," published in 1841.

<sup>2</sup> "Random Recollections," pp. 77-9.

<sup>3</sup> "Macaulay's Life and Letters," pp. 392-3.

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can be no doubt that there are changes of fashion which make the good speaking of one generation differ widely from the good speaking of another: bad speaking is always much the same. Perhaps the most salient contrast between the oratory of the House of Commons of the Twentieth Century and its predecessors is in the matter of length. Lord Brougham says of the greatest of all Parliamentary orators, the elder Pitt: "He was prolix in the whole texture of his discourse, and he was certainly the first who introduced into our Senate the practice, adopted in the American War by Mr. Burke, and continued by others, of long speeches—speeches of two and three hours—by which oratory has gained little, and business less." Brougham himself, in the most famous of his efforts, on Law Reform, in February, 1828, occupied six hours. Lord Palmerston's "*Civis Romanus Sum*" speech in June, 1850, which covered not merely the Don Pacifico case, but his whole foreign policy, lasted five hours. And these feats of endurance were rivalled in later years both by Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone. I remember Mr. Balfour telling me that, when he first entered the House in 1874, a full-dress debate was not considered to be properly rounded off unless these two illustrious gladiators spoke in succession, usually at or after midnight, for an hour and a half or two hours apiece.

Happily, as one may be permitted to say, these gargantuan meals are not required by or suited to the appetite of our degenerate days. Several causes have contributed to bring about the modern fashion of comparative brevity. One of these is the curtailment of the sittings of the House by the establishment of twelve o'clock and eleven o'clock rules. Another,

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and a more potent one, is the condensation by the Press of its Parliamentary reports. The newspapers can no longer afford to devote column after column of their space to House of Commons duels. They are obliged by modern conditions to go to press hours earlier than used to be the case, and the tendency is to substitute more and more a readable summary by an expert observer for the verbatim report. An incidental result has been that the leading speakers, who used to wind up the debate, prefer now to speak earlier in the sitting.

The anonymous author of "Random Recollections, 1830-1835" records that "it very rarely happens that any of the best speakers address the House before ten o'clock. . . . A succession of fourth- or fifth-rate orators will almost invariably be found on their legs from the meeting of the House until that hour."<sup>1</sup>

The essentials of Parliamentary speaking remain what they always were, but among the minor changes in oratorical method, one of the most noteworthy is the disuse of classical quotation. The Members of the House of Commons in the eighteenth century, though in other respects indifferently educated, had for the most part a smattering of Latin, which they had retained from their public school and university days, and which enabled them now and again to recognize the tags from Virgil and Horace with which the leading speakers were accustomed to pelt one another. Burke, in his great speech on Fox's India Bill in 1783, probably presumed too much on the width of their reading when he recited five lines from one of the worst of Roman poets, Silius Italicus. The convention of Latin quotation persisted, despite the transformation

<sup>1</sup> P. 55.

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in the personnel of the House, during the greater part of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It was never turned to a finer rhetorical purpose than in Mr. Gladstone's famous citation from Lucretius (six lines) on the Affirmation Bill of 1883.<sup>2</sup> But it was already on the wane. Sir S. Northcote records a conversation with Lord Beaconsfield in the last year of his life (July, 1880) in the course of which both "lamented the disuse of classical quotations in the House of Commons." "He (Lord Beaconsfield) said he had at one time tried to revert to them, but the Speaker (Denison) had asked him not. 'Why? Do you think they don't like it?' 'Oh no! The House rather likes it, but you are making John Russell restless, and I am afraid of his taking to it too. He gave us six or seven lines of Virgil the other night, which had not the smallest connexion with his speech or with the subject.'"<sup>3</sup>

During my Parliamentary lifetime the practice has fallen into almost complete desuetude. I have once or twice made fitful attempts to revive it, but received little encouragement. Lord Curzon, in his Rede Lecture on "Modern Parliamentary Eloquence," states that in his own time he could only recall two Greek quotations in the House of Commons. I regret that I cannot recall either occasion. Greek was, I believe, not uncommonly quoted in Grattan's Parliament, but it was never the custom at Westminster, and the single recorded attempt to introduce it in the eighteenth

<sup>1</sup> E.g., the prolonged duel over the Trojan Horse between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe in 1866-7.—*Ante*, Vol I, 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> The orator prefaced his quotation with the perhaps over-sanguine words: "Many of the members of the House will recollect the majestic and noble lines . . ."

<sup>3</sup> Buckle, VI, p. 584. This conversation throws a vivid light on the width of Disraeli's literary range, and the originality of his critical judgments. It contains the priceless (and most just) remark that "Euripides had a good deal of fun in him."

## THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

century was immediately squelched by the ridicule of Sheridan.<sup>1</sup>

Various endeavours have been made in our days, with more or less success, to economize the labours of the House by such expedients as Grand Committees, and to abbreviate its sittings by an earlier closing hour. On the whole these changes have been justified by experience. By far the least successful of the experiments was that initiated by Mr. Balfour, of a daily sitting at two o'clock, with an adjournment from half-past seven to nine. We still have from time to time demands that the House should sit in the morning as it used to do in olden times. In my opinion such a change would be both impolitic and unworkable. It would seriously harass Ministers in the discharge of their official work, and (what is even worse) it would in time lead to a deterioration in the composition of the House itself. It has always been enriched as a representative body by the infusion of men engaged in other callings than politics, which they cannot afford to abandon or neglect.

### NOTE

An instructive chapter in history might be written on the falsified predictions of the opponents of political and social Reform. Two notable illustrations are to be found in Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's recently published book, "The Rise of Modern Industry" (Methuen, 1925): the abolition of the Slave Trade, and the restriction of Child Labour.

"In the eleven years from 1783 to 1793, Liverpool

<sup>1</sup> Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, in his admirable "British History in the Nineteenth Century" (c. 12), remarks: "It is significant of much that in the 17th century members of Parliament quoted from the Bible; in the 18th and 19th centuries from the Classics; in the 20th century from nothing at all."



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slaving ships carried over 300,000 slaves from Africa to the West Indies, and sold them for over £15,000,000. In 1793 this single port had secured three-sevenths of the slave trade of Europe." It was confidently predicted, when, thanks to the efforts of the dying Charles Fox in the Ministry of "All the Talents" in 1806, the trade was abolished, that its destruction would leave her with "idle ships and deserted docks." "But in 1810 the ships were busier than ever they had been in the most prosperous years of the slave trade."

It was the same with the restriction and protection of Child Labour in the factories. After years of agitation and more or less abortive experiments, the Ten Hours Act was at last passed in 1847. Sir James Graham prophesied that it would ruin the cotton industry, and with it the trade of the country. After the passing of the Act "all the sombre predictions by which it had been resisted for twenty years proved as false as the predictions of the fate of Liverpool."<sup>1</sup>

In both cases one of the stock arguments for the maintenance of a system of inhuman and indefensible cruelty was that, if England set the example of giving it up, her trade rivals would seize the opportunity, and put her at a disadvantage.<sup>2</sup>

The argument has even in these days a familiar ring.

<sup>1</sup> "The Rise of Modern Industry" pp. 203-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET—I

THE relations under modern conditions of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet have been described and discussed by statesmen of large experience and high authority ; amongst others by Lord Morley in his monograph on Walpole (1889)<sup>1</sup> ; by Sir William Harcourt in a Memorandum written by way of criticism on Morley's book (1889)<sup>2</sup> ; and by Lord Rosebery, in a notice in the *Anglo-Saxon Review* of Parker's "Peel" (1899).

In the matter of nomenclature, the word "Cabinet" is not a term of art ; it is indeed unknown in Constitutional law. The same might be said until quite recent times of the phrases "Prime Minister" and "Premier." Of the latter ("Premier"), Sir W. Harcourt writes : "The word as a Parliamentary word is very modern. I dislike it very much and would never use it. The old word in the time of North, and I think of Pitt, was '*the* Minister.' I used to affect this phrase as applied to Disraeli, which pleased him. I would never say willingly even Prime Minister in the House of Commons."

There can be little doubt that the phrase "Prime Minister" came into vogue during Sir Robert Walpole's long tenure of power, as a term of political vituperation. Lord Melbourne, after his own resignation of the office, writes to Queen Victoria (November 4, 1841):

<sup>1</sup> Lord Morley says in a letter to me (March 3, 1919) : "By the way, the chapter in my book upon the Cabinet was in truth the work of W. E. G."

<sup>2</sup> Printed in full as Appendix II in Gardiner's "Harcourt," II, p. 609.

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“ Sir Robert Walpole was always accused of having introduced and arrogated to himself an office previously unknown to the Law and Constitution, that of Prime or Sole Minister, and we learn from Lady Charlotte Lindsay’s accounts of her father<sup>1</sup> that in his own family Lord North would never suffer himself to be called *Prime* Minister, because it was an office unknown to the Constitution. This was a notion derived from the combined Whig and Tory Opposition to Sir Robert Walpole, to which Lord North and his family had belonged.”<sup>2</sup>

In the nineteenth century the first instance which I have come across of the use of the phrase in an official document is the description of Lord Beaconsfield, in the preamble to the Treaty of Berlin (1878), as “ First Lord of Her Majesty’s Treasury, and Prime Minister of England ” [*sic*].

The status of the office received Royal recognition in the Warrant of King Edward VII addressed to the Earl Marshal on December 2, 1905, of which the operative words are as follows :

“ Know ye that in the exercise of our Royal Prerogative We do hereby declare our Royal Will and Pleasure that at all times hereafter the Prime Minister of Us our Heirs and Successors shall have place and precedence next after the Archbishop of York.”

I am not aware of the circumstances which led to the issue of this Warrant. The first Prime Minister to hold the new status was Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. So far as I know, the office is still without statutory recognition.

There is not, and cannot be, from the nature of

<sup>1</sup> She was a daughter of Lord North.

<sup>2</sup> “ Queen Victoria’s Letters ” (1907), I, pp. 449-50.

## PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

the case, any authoritative definition of the precise relation of the Prime Minister to his colleagues. "In practice," as Sir W. Harcourt says, "the thing depends very much upon the character of the man. What was true of the Cabinet of Peel and Palmerston would not be true of other Ministers." It was not true, one may add, of Lord Melbourne, of whom Greville writes in 1840: "He is Prime Minister only in name and has no authority"; nor of Lord Aberdeen, in the Coalition of 1853-5, where almost every leading man was a law to himself, and which Lord John Russell, perhaps the chief offender, described as the "worst Government I ever belonged to."<sup>1</sup> The Latin phrases which have been resorted to—" *primus inter pares*," " *velut inter ignes Luna minores* "<sup>2</sup>—do not carry the matter any further. The office of Prime Minister is what its holder chooses and is able to make of it.

There are limiting conditions to which the most masterful and assiduous of Prime Ministers has to conform. "Peel," says Lord Rosebery, "was in name and deed that functionary, so abhorred and repudiated by the statesmen of the eighteenth century—a Prime Minister.

"In these days we have returned, perhaps necessarily, to the views of the last century (the eighteenth). A Prime Minister who is the senior partner in every department as well as president of the whole, who deals with all the business of government, who inspires and vibrates through every part, is almost, if not quite, an impossibility.<sup>3</sup> A First Minister is the most

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Lord Clarendon, Sept. 23, 1854, in Gooch's "Later Correspondence," II, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> "Harcourt," II, p. 612.

<sup>3</sup> An exception should be made of the case of Mr. Gladstone, who, in his first Government, 1868-74, almost answered to this description. It was not so in his later Cabinets.

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that can be hoped for, the Chairman and, on most occasions, the spokesman of that Board of Directors which is called the Cabinet; who has the initiation and guidance of large courses of public policy; but who does not, unless specially invoked, interfere departmentally." Later on, he adds: "A First Minister has only the influence with the Cabinet which is given him by his personal arguments, his personal qualities, and his personal weight. But this is not all. All his colleagues he must convince, some he may have to humour, some even to cajole: a harassing, laborious and ungracious task."

That is, in its concluding passage, a personal impression; but it is unquestionable that no Prime Minister now could find time or energy for such a departmental autocracy as Peel appears to have exercised. Lord Palmerston's authority in his Cabinet (though he was to the last one of the most industrious of men) was maintained by widely different faculties and methods.

It is relevant at this point to recall the views of Peel himself, which are to be found in a most interesting conversation, after his resignation in 1846, between Mr. Gladstone and himself.<sup>1</sup>

"He said (reports Mr. Gladstone) he had been twice Prime Minister, and nothing would induce him again to take part in the formation of a Government;<sup>2</sup> the labour and anxiety were too great; and he repeated more than once emphatically, with regard to the work of his post, 'No one in the least degree knows what it is. . . . The whole correspondence with the Queen . . . and with Peers and Members of Parliament in my own hand, as well as other persons of

<sup>1</sup> Morley's "*Gladstone*," I, pp. 297-300.

<sup>2</sup> He was not yet sixty.



*Photo: Elliott and Fry.*

THE EARL OF ROSEBERY.



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consequence ; the sitting seven or eight hours a day to listen in the House of Commons ; then I must, of course, have my mind on the principal subjects connected with the various departments . . . and all the reading connected with them.””

MR. G. : “ I can quite assent to the proposition that no one understands the labour of your post. But then you have been Prime Minister in a sense in which no other man has been it since Mr. Pitt’s time.”

SIR R. P. : “ But Mr. Pitt got up every day at eleven o’clock, and drank two bottles of port wine every night.”

MR. G. : “ And died of old age at forty-six. . . . You have had extraordinary physical strength to sustain you, and you have performed an extraordinary task. Your Government has not been carried on by a Cabinet, but by the heads of departments each in communication with you.”

Peel assented . . . and he spoke of the defects of the Melbourne Government as a mere Government of departments, without a centre of unity.

Gladstone then went on to say : “ Mr. Perceval, Lord Liverpool, Lord Melbourne, were not Prime Ministers in this sense ; what Mr. Canning might have been, the time was too short to show.”

Sir R. Peel concluded the interview by saying that it sometimes occurred to him, whether it would after all be a good arrangement to have the Prime Minister in the House of Lords. Whereupon Mr. Gladstone asked if, in that case, it would not be quite necessary that the Leader in the Commons should frequently take upon himself to make decisions which ought properly to be made by the Head of the Government. Sir R. Peel replied that that would constitute a great difficulty ; that although Lord Melbourne might be



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very well adapted to take his part in such a plan, there were, he believed, difficulties in it under him when Lord J. Russell led the House of Commons; and that when he (Peel) led the House, in 1828, under the Duke of Wellington as Premier [*sic*], he had a very great advantage in the disposition of the Duke "to follow the judgment of others in whom he had confidence with respect to all civil matters."

It is nearly eighty years since this conversation took place between two remarkable men, one of whom had been twice, and the other was to be four times, Prime Minister. The prescience of both is, in the light of our intervening experience, a signal instance of political sagacity.

Another *locus classicus* on the subject is the recorded opinion of Lord Salisbury, who was three times Prime Minister in the last years of the Victorian Era. It is to be found in Lady Gwendolen Cecil's account of what her distinguished father thought as to the fundamental requirements of the Cabinet system:

"Originating in a spontaneous gathering of friends, legally unrecognized, it had inherited a tradition of freedom and informality which was in his eyes indispensable to its efficiency. A Cabinet discussion was not the occasion for the deliverance of considered judgments, but an opportunity for the pursuit of practical conclusions. It could only be made completely effective for this purpose if the flow of suggestions which accompanied it attained the freedom and fullness which belonged to private conversations—members must feel themselves untrammelled by any consideration of consistency with the past, or self-justification in the future. The convention which forbade any note being taken of what was said—futile

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as a safeguard for secrecy—was invaluable as a guarantee for this irresponsible licence in discussion. Lord Salisbury would have extended it in principle to the record preserved in each man's memory. The first rule of Cabinet conduct, he used to declare, was that no member should ever "Hansardize" another—even compare his present contribution to the common fund of counsel with a previously expressed opinion. Any record kept of the discussions must greatly restrict this invaluable liberty; if public reference to them were ever to be tolerated, it must disappear."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Salisbury," II, pp. 223-4.

## CHAPTER V

### PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET—II

THE relations of the members of the Cabinet to their Chief and to one another present little resemblance to the practice of the eighteenth century. As Lord Morley says (writing in 1913, the year before the War) :<sup>1</sup> "The growth of special interests, each claiming for itself a representative Minister in the Cabinet, has turned it into a noun of multitude indeed, and a noun not wholly favourable to that concentrated deliberation which was possible when Pitt had first six, then seven colleagues, Peel twelve, and Gladstone fourteen. To-day we are a score." There is no rule or convention which apportions the membership of the Cabinet between the two Houses, though here again the contrast between modern practice and that of the eighteenth century is noteworthy. At the close of Walpole's Government the only Commoner in the Cabinet besides the Prime Minister was the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Charles Wager.<sup>2</sup> In the Pelham Government, and again in the early days of the younger Pitt, all the members of the Cabinet, except its Head, were Peers. Dundas, Pitt's favourite counsellor and right-hand man, was not admitted till he became Home Secretary in 1791.<sup>3</sup> In these days, whatever Party is in power, a majority of the Cabinet is drawn from the House of Commons.

<sup>1</sup> "Politics and History," p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Morley's "Walpole," p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> At least equally noteworthy is the exclusion of *novi homines*. Neither Burke nor Sheridan was ever admitted to the Cabinet.

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Apart from the increase in number, perhaps the most significant feature in the development of the Cabinet has been its growth in corporate unity and responsibility. Sir W. Harcourt says:<sup>1</sup>

“The solidarity of the Cabinet and the accepted principle that they were bound to vote together and support the measures of the Government was certainly not established till long after the time of Walpole. During the frequent Administrations in the first ten years of George III’s reign there were repeated examples of members of the Government, and even the Lord Chancellor, opposing the measures of the Administration both by speech and vote. Notably Camden and Thurlow.<sup>2</sup> . . . I doubt if the principle can be said to have been established till the supremacy of Pitt.”

In the Cabinets of the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, though, with the exception of that of “All the Talents” in 1806, and possibly that of Canning in 1827, they should all be called Tory Governments, there were questions of what would appear to us to be of vital importance—such, for instance, as Catholic Emancipation (where Canning and Castlereagh were in opposition to the majority of their colleagues) and (within limits) Parliamentary Reform—in regard to which there were openly avowed and tolerated differences of opinion.

The convention of what Harcourt calls Cabinet “solidarity”—that is, of such an appearance of unity as compels a dissentient to resign his office before he openly speaks and votes against the policy of the Administration—may be said to date from the

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner, II, p. 610.

<sup>2</sup> Loughborough, Thurlow’s successor, was an even greater master than Thurlow in the art of treachery. He compassed the downfall of his Chief in 1801, but his malignant activities were carried on underground.

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Duke of Wellington's Government in 1828. In its most extreme form it found expression in Melbourne's cynical dictum, some years later, that "it doesn't much matter what we say, but we must all say the same thing."

In 1800 Dundas "traces no less than four factions in a Cabinet of a dozen persons."<sup>1</sup> And, as we have seen (vol. I, p. 48), Lord Beaconsfield writes, in 1877, to the Queen that "in a Cabinet of twelve there are seven parties or policies."

In the Balfour Cabinet (1902-5) it is hard to say how many separate attitudes found favour from time to time, before the avalanche of resignations in the autumn of 1903. In my own Cabinet there was more than one subject of animated controversy, but until the outbreak of war there was no resignation on any ground of policy.

Mr. Gladstone lays down the modern rule in his characteristic phraseology in a letter to Lord Granville, written in March, 1884, when his own Cabinet was a scene of almost constant discord:

"What are 'divisions in a Cabinet'? In my opinion, differences of view stated, and if need be argued, and then advisedly surrendered with a view to a common conclusion, are not 'divisions in a Cabinet.' By that phrase I understand *unaccommodated differences on matters standing for immediate action.*"<sup>2</sup>

It is a mistake to suppose that even the strongest Prime Minister is always the supreme or ultimate arbiter of decisions in his own Cabinet. Harcourt, in the Memorandum already quoted, declares—and I believe with accuracy—that "the recognition of the South in the American Civil War was prevented

<sup>1</sup> Rosebery's "Pitt," p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Morley's "Gladstone," III, p. 175.

## PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

by the majority of the Cabinet against the opinion of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer" (Palmerston, Russell and Gladstone—a formidable trio). So, again, a few years later, "when the Bund invaded Schleswig and Jutland in 1864, Russell and Palmerston favoured armed, even if single-handed, support of Denmark. The rest of the Cabinet, strongly reinforced by the Queen, saved the country from an unsupported adventure to which the public opinion was opposed, to which its resources were inadequate, and which would almost certainly have given the signal for Louis Napoleon to march to the Rhine."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Stansfeld, who became a member of the first Gladstone Cabinet in 1871, has left on record his impressions of the demeanour and conduct of the Prime Minister, who in those days wielded an authority comparable to that of Pitt, Peel or Palmerston. Mr. Gladstone's conduct" (he says) "in the Cabinet was very curious. When I first joined I naturally thought that his position was so commanding that he would be able to say: 'This is my policy; accept it or not as you like.' But he did not. He was always profuse in his expressions of respect for the Cabinet. There was a wonderful combination in Mr. Gladstone of imperiousness and of deference. In the Cabinet

<sup>1</sup> See Gooch: "Later Correspondence of Lord J. Russell," I, p. lxii. It may be interesting to recall that of the two "Adventurers" one (Lord Palmerston) was eighty, and the other (Lord Russell) was seventy-two.

Queen Victoria writes, February 25, 1864 (during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis) to King Leopold: "I am wellnigh worn to nothing with vexation, distress and worry, and I have asked General Grey to tell you all about the conduct of those two dreadful old men."—"Letters of Queen Victoria, 1862-1878," I, p. 168.

The nature of the gamble to which the intrepid pair of veterans were prepared to commit the country may be realized when it is remembered that (as Palmerston admitted to Russell) the total force we could put in the field would be 20,000 men, armed with muzzle-loading rifles, against 200,000 or 300,000 Prussians, armed with the new breech-loading rifle. (See Spender: "The Public Life," II, p. 45.)

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he would assume that he was nothing. He always tried to lead them on by unconscious steps to his own conclusions."<sup>1</sup>

There are some subjects which, though of importance in themselves, are in practice never (or hardly ever) brought before the Cabinet. One is the exercise by the Home Secretary of the prerogative of mercy. Another is a change of personnel in the Cabinet itself. "The notion," said Mr. Gladstone in 1882, "of a title in the Cabinet to be consulted on succession to Cabinet office is absurd. During thirty-eight years since I first entered the Cabinet I have never known more than a friendly announcement before publicity, and very partial consultation with one or two, especially the Leaders in the Second House."<sup>2</sup>

*A fortiori*, the same rule applies to appointments outside the Cabinet, though I have once known (before I was Prime Minister) a discussion in the Cabinet, in very exceptional circumstances, of the succession to the Viceroyalty of India.

On the other hand, such a question as the Dissolution of Parliament is always submitted to the Cabinet for ultimate decision.<sup>3</sup> In the period surveyed in this book there have been eleven such Dissolutions: 1868, 1874, 1880, 1885, 1886, 1892, 1895, 1900, 1906, 1910 (January) and 1910 (December).

Those in 1868 and in 1885 were the automatic consequences of extensions of the franchise. In 1874 Mr. Gladstone communicated his intention in the first instance to Lord Granville and Mr. Cardwell, and perhaps Mr. Goschen (the two latter being heads of the Spending Departments). In his own words

<sup>1</sup> Morley's "Gladstone," II, p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, III, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Disraeli's action in May, 1868, is only an apparent exception.—(Buckle, V, p. 33.)

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(written in the last year of his life): "When I proposed the Dissolution to the Cabinet, they acceded to it without opposition or even, I think, discussion."<sup>1</sup> Before submitting the matter to the Cabinet he obtained the Queen's assent.

In 1880 the question of Dissolution was fully debated in the Cabinet, as appears from Lord Beaconsfield's letter to the Queen (March 6):<sup>2</sup> "The Cabinet just concluded sat two hours and a half, and every member of it was requested to give his opinion, the members of the House of Commons having the priority. There were various views and some differences of opinion" (as to whether the Dissolution should be immediate or postponed to the autumn), "but the ultimate result was unanimity."

The circumstances of Mr. Gladstone's Dissolution in 1886 have been already described. According to Lord Morley's account: "When Ministers went into the Cabinet, three of them inclined pretty strongly towards Resignation. . . . Mr. Gladstone, however, . . . at once opened the case with a list of twelve reasons for recommending Dissolution. . . . His conclusion was accepted without comment." Mr. Gladstone then proceeded to communicate the decision of the Cabinet to the Queen.

In 1895, after the defeat of Lord Rosebery's Government on the Cordite Vote, the Prime Minister at once submitted to the Cabinet the alternatives of Resignation and Dissolution. There was much difference of opinion and prolonged debate, but the joint opinion of Lord Rosebery and Sir W. Harcourt in favour of Resignation prevailed.<sup>3</sup>

I have no personal knowledge of the procedure

<sup>1</sup> Morley, II, p. 483.

<sup>2</sup> Buckle, VI, p. 514.

<sup>3</sup> See ante, Vol I, p. 232.



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that was followed by the Unionist Government, which advised the Dissolution of 1900, but I have little doubt that the Cabinet was consulted. In 1906 Dissolution was the obvious and necessary consequence of the Liberal Government assuming office. In both the elections of 1910 the Dissolution had been approved by the Cabinet.

It is not, or was not in any of the Cabinets in which I have sat, the custom (unless in exceptional cases not always of the first importance) to take a division. Lord Morley says that in his second Cabinet (1880-85) Mr. Gladstone "adopted a practice of taking votes and counting numbers, of which more than one old hand complained as an innovation."<sup>1</sup> Lord Granville said to him in 1886: "I think you too often counted noses in your last Cabinet." It was left to the Prime Minister to collect and interpret the general sense of his colleagues. No stranger (unless specially summoned to give information on a particular matter) was ever admitted; and when a message came from outside, the door was always opened and shut by a Minister. No food or drink was allowed, except some hard biscuits, which were believed to date from the time of Pitt, and some plain water. Smoking was strictly tabooed. In the matter of seating there was no order of precedence, but each Minister always occupied the same place. In my Cabinet, Morley sat on one side of me, and, after the outbreak of War, Kitchener. It was contrary to etiquette for any member of the Cabinet except the Prime Minister to take notes, and the only record of the proceedings was in the letter which he wrote to the King, and of which a copy was preserved by his Private Secretary. Mr. Gladstone (writing in 1883) declares that no one is

<sup>1</sup> Morley's "Gladstone," III, p. 5.

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entitled to make a note of proceedings except the Prime Minister ;<sup>1</sup> and Lord Salisbury, as appears from his opinion already quoted, reasserted and justified the practice. It continued to my time, and I remember that when my attention was called to the fact that a Minister was apparently taking notes on his own account, I felt bound, with the assent of all my colleagues, to make a somewhat sharp remonstrance.

There is now a Cabinet Secretariat, framed (I believe) on the model of that which has always been part of the machinery of the Committee of Imperial Defence. I have no experience of its working.

<sup>1</sup> Morley, III, p. 114.

## CHAPTER VI

### OFFICES AND PENSIONS

OF the Offices which used to be regarded as entitling their holders to Cabinet rank, one—that of Chief Secretary for Ireland, who of late years generally sat in the Cabinet unless the Viceroy was there—has disappeared. On the other hand, during and since the War a number of new Ministries have been created—Air, Pensions, Labour, Mines, Transport, Overseas Trade, etc.—some of which are apparently looked upon as qualifying their incumbents for the Inner Council. I am sceptical as to the permanent utility of many of these new offices, with their retinue of large and costly staffs ; most of them ought to be absorbed in the Board of Trade, or others of the old Departments. In any case, the size of the Cabinet might well be reduced.

This naturally leads to the question of the remuneration of Ministers.

The First Lord of the Treasury appears to have received a salary of £5,000 ever since 1660.

The nominal remuneration of the Lord Chancellor in the eighteenth century was much less than it is to-day, but it was enormously augmented by fees, and Lord Hardwicke, who held the office for nearly twenty years, was able, without resorting to the questionable methods of Lord Macclesfield, to amass a huge fortune. The office of Paymaster-General of the Army was (especially in time of war) the most lucrative in the Government. Henry Fox, who clung

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to it for many years, was referred to in a famous petition from the Livery of the City of London as "the public defaulter of unaccounted millions,"<sup>1</sup> and it is said that the interest on the outstanding balances, when he left office, brought him in a quarter of a million. Walpole was both First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his total official income is estimated to have been about £7,400 a year.<sup>2</sup> But the fat sinecures which were at the disposal of the Chief Minister enabled him to make ample provision for his family at the public expense. Walpole's three sons held the pick of these posts, bringing them in a total income of about £14,000, for which none of them did a week's work in the year.<sup>3</sup>

Some of Walpole's successors drew as large a sum, if not a larger, in the way of direct personal payment. This arose from the practice of Prime Ministers presenting themselves to the office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, which was worth in those days about £3,000 a year. It was so held by Lord North, Mr. Pitt, and Lord Liverpool. Since 1827, when the salary was abolished, it has been regarded as a liability rather than an asset, and few Prime Ministers in more recent times have been able or willing to take it.<sup>4</sup>

In an Appendix to Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," contributed by Sir E. W. Hamilton, afterwards Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, there is an interesting analysis of the Prime Minister's official income in the

<sup>1</sup> "Annual Register," 1769, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Morley's "Walpole," p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130. As Lord Morley points out, "these indirect provisions for the families of great public servants" had the approval of the great economist Burke.

<sup>4</sup> Exceptions were Lord Palmerston and, for a short time, Lord Salisbury, who soon got rid of it.

closing years of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The "Summary of Mr. Pitt's Emoluments" is as follows :—

1. First Lord of the Treasury .. ..	£5,000
2. Chancellor of the Exchequer .. ..	2,452
3. Warden of the Cinque Ports .. ..	3,080
<hr/>	
Total emoluments .. ..	£10,532

In other words, at that date the Prime Minister received more than twice as much as he does to-day, and even if the salary which fell to him as Chancellor of the Exchequer is deducted, his emoluments amounted to £8,000, as compared with the £5,000 which is paid to the present holder of the office.

The two offices of First Lord and Chancellor of the Exchequer were more than once combined after the death of Mr. Pitt: in 1810 by Mr. Perceval, who is stated not to have drawn the salary of Chancellor of the Exchequer;<sup>1</sup> in 1827, for only a few months, by Mr. Canning; in 1834-35, also only for a few months, by Sir Robert Peel; in 1873-74 and again in 1880-82, by Mr. Gladstone. He received a salary of £7,500, which was fixed in 1873 as the maximum remuneration of the First Lord of the Treasury, however many offices he might hold.

The accession of Lord Grey's Government at the beginning of the reign of William IV, in an atmosphere hostile to sinecures and for the moment favourable to public economy, appears to have been the occasion for a complete overhauling of the charges hitherto borne on the Civil List, out of which there used to be paid the salaries of Ambassadors, Judges, and some

<sup>1</sup> Morley's "Walpole," p. 137.

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Ministers. Select Committees of the House of Commons sat to consider and report on the reduction of salaries and on Civil Government charges. Two reports were presented—one in March and the other in October, 1831.

The salary of the First Lord of the Treasury was left at £5,000 a year. The Committee recommended that the same figure should be fixed for the Secretaries of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The recommendation was given effect to by Treasury Minute and an Order in Council. In the new offices which have since been created, the salary has, as a rule, been fixed by Statute. The result is that a number of Ministers who are of Cabinet rank are paid at the rate of £5,000 a year, while others of the same status do not receive more than £2,000.

The whole subject of Ministerial Remuneration has been, since the War, the subject of inquiry by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, who presented their Report on December 15, 1920. The Report, which contains some interesting and valuable appendices, made a number of recommendations which (so far as I know) have not been carried into effect. Its principal suggestion was that the salary of the Prime Minister should be raised from £5,000 to £8,000 a year, that all members of the Cabinet should be paid £5,000 a year, and that the various offices should be graded into four classes, with salaries ranging from £5,000 to £1,500.

I was called as a witness before the Committee, and I may cite some passages from my evidence.

“The Lord Chancellor is the only Minister—and people do not realize this—who gets a pension.”

Q. “Except those who claim?”

A. “Unless the Minister makes a special claim, and

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even then, I think, there are only four first-class pensions. As a matter of fact, no Minister has any title to a pension except the Lord Chancellor, who gets a pension of £5,000 a year automatically ; he has to sign a document, but it has nothing to do with his means or anything of that kind. I have never known an exception,<sup>1</sup> and, in fact, it may be taken that he always has a pension of £5,000 a year, which makes it even less easy to justify his having a salary of twice as much as any of his colleagues.

“ I confess I think the Prime Minister is underpaid. I was in office myself continuously for eleven years—two years as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and for the best part of nine years as Prime Minister. I do not suppose my experience is in the least unique, but I was a much poorer man when I left office than when I entered.<sup>2</sup> The office of Prime Minister, if it is to be properly discharged, cannot, I think, be discharged, unless a man has private means of his own, on a salary of £5,000 a year. He has a number of duties, if he is to perform his office properly, of entertaining and affording hospitality to all sorts and conditions of people, both at home and abroad, which, under the existing arrangement, he has to defray entirely at his own cost. We established, when I was Prime Minister, a useful institution—at least, I think it has turned out to be useful—called the Government Hospitality Fund. It is generally in charge of the First Commissioner of Works, and it is very properly resorted to for the entertaining on a large scale of distinguished foreigners, and other people

<sup>1</sup> I believe that Viscount Finlay is one.

<sup>2</sup> Lord John Russell (also giving evidence to a Committee of the House of Commons) : “ I know that for my own part I never had a debt in my life till I was First Lord of the Treasury ” (1846-52).—(Walpole, “ Life of Lord Russell,” II, p. 145.)

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whom the State ought for the time being to look after during their temporary sojourn in this country. But even with that, which was a relief to the Prime Minister, because he had to do a lot of that entertaining himself in the old days or else nobody did it, and quite apart from the special responsibilities which fall upon him as distinguished from his colleagues, I think his salary ought to be raised—I do not say by how much, because that is a matter of detail, but I think it ought to be raised ; I think he is underpaid. As to the rest, I see no reason why, in regard to those who are considered to be entitled by public services, or on whatever other ground, to sit in the inner circle of the Cabinet, there should be any discrimination whatsoever in point of salary. It would make the task of the Prime Minister in forming a Government easier, and it would prevent invidious and, for the most part, artificial distinctions being drawn as between the relative status and authority of particular offices.

“ I should make the Cabinet smaller. There are one or two offices, even among the old offices—and I am not speaking of any of these new creations—which I think might very easily be omitted normally from what is called Cabinet status. In order to make my meaning clear, I ought to say that certain offices have always had the status of Cabinet offices which are really sinecures. The office of Lord President of the Council is very nearly, though not quite, a sinecure. The Lord Privy Seal is an absolute sinecure. The Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster is to all intents and purposes a sinecure ; you could perform all the duties attaching to the Chancellorship of the Duchy in three hours a week—he used to be called the maid-of-all-work in the Cabinet ; he has no departmental or administrative duties of his own



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which take up any time. In my time—and it was a growing practice—the offices both of the Lord President of the Council and Lord Privy Seal were commonly held with another Cabinet office, with the result that their salaries were saved. For instance, I remember quite well one of the Secretaries of State being Lord President of the Council, whereby the country saved the £2,000 a year which would go to the office of Lord President. The Lord Privy Seal I do not think has been paid a salary within my recollection, but perhaps he has a salary now; it was an office always held with some other office, or held gratuitously. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster undoubtedly was paid a salary of £2,000 a year, but I see no reason why he should be a member of the Cabinet at all.

“ I think anybody who is a member of the Cabinet ought to receive the same remuneration as any other member of the Cabinet so long as he is one of them; that is my view.”

Q. “ As regards the office of Prime Minister, independent of the Hospitality Fund, which is a recent creation, there must be an enormous lot of personal entertainment to visitors from abroad ? ”

A. “ Yes, it is enormous. Nobody who has not been Prime Minister knows really what a Prime Minister’s day is. During the time I was Prime Minister, for a special reason I took on the office of Secretary of State for War, and held it with the Prime Ministership for, I think, four or five months before the outbreak of the War. I did not take any salary as Secretary of State for War, and to that extent during those few months there was a little economy; but, taking the two offices together, I think the work was really heavier than probably any man ought to undertake.”

Q. “ Independent altogether of the Hospitality

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Fund, I take it the entertaining would lose its value if carried out under the Hospitality Fund? "

A. " Yes, you must have them at your own table, and you must talk to them in a more or less intimate and friendly way. An official banquet is not the same thing."

Q. " Would you cut out altogether the question of a pension to the Prime Minister? "

A. " There are strong arguments one way and the other. Personally I would rather he had not a pension."

Q. " You would rather do it on a salary? "

A. " I am not in favour of pensions."

Q. " I suppose all the salaries pay income tax? "

A. " Yes. When you are talking of any particular figure, like £5,000 a year, I ought really to have said £x, because what I mean is equality of remuneration for Cabinet Ministers. I am not wedded in the least to the figure of £5,000. It may be, with all the various changes in the cost of living, and so forth, that the Committee would suggest another figure. I say £x ought to be the sum."

Q. " You said that you did not approve of a pension for the Prime Minister. Can you give a reason why you do not approve of it? "

A. " If you pension the Prime Minister, I do not see why you should not pension all the other Ministers."

Q. " Do you not think the Prime Minister carries such enormous responsibility compared with the others? "

A. " It may be he would be entitled to a bigger pension than the others because he carried larger responsibility. I dare say the Committee know that in some of our Dominions—in Canada, for instance—the Leader of the Opposition gets a salary. I

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remember quite well that when Sir Wilfrid Laurier ceased to be Prime Minister (which he had been, I think, for the best part of twenty years) he became Leader of the Opposition, and automatically received a salary as such. I do not know whether it is the same in Australia, but it is or was the case in Canada. Now, that is a form of pension. On the whole, my disposition is against giving ex-Ministers pensions."

Q. "Have not the bulk of British Prime Ministers been men who could occupy the post without working for their livelihood?"

A. "Certainly the bulk undoubtedly have been such."

Q. "But there have been within the last fifty or sixty years three or four Prime Ministers who, one might say, were professional men?"

A. "Yes. I was a professional man myself, and it meant a considerable sacrifice of income to me to take office."

Q. "There is also the present Prime Minister; and was not Lord Beaconsfield a man who had to write largely for his livelihood?"

A. "Yes, and, but for his wife, he would have been very badly off."

Q. "I think you will agree that it is advisable that the nation should have the choice of a man of that kind, if it wants him?"

A. "Certainly."

Q. "If that man has held that kind of post, is it possible, in consonance with the dignity of a British Prime Minister, that that man should go back to his ordinary vocation? Is there any precedent for it?"

A. "There is precedent for it in the President of the United States of America, who frequently goes

## OFFICES AND PENSIONS

back. President Taft went back first to the Bar, but he is now Professor at one of the Universities. Many Presidents of the United States have gone back to civil life."

Q. "That is in America, but I think there is no precedent in British politics?"

A. "I do not know that there is an actual precedent. Mr. Pitt, who was a penniless man, or practically penniless, when he became Prime Minister at the age of twenty-four, took on a most precarious job, as history has recorded, and he contemplated going back to the Western Circuit as a barrister."

Q. "With your large experience of being in Cabinets, and having formed Cabinets yourself and watched them, would you be prepared to say what the maximum number of any really good working Cabinet ought to be?"

A. "I think Cabinets are too big. I think the tendency of late years, quite apart from the War, has been to make the Cabinet too big. From my experience, which is, of course, a very long one, as I have been continuously Prime Minister longer than anybody now living, or than anybody for the last hundred years, if I were to start afresh now I should cut down the numbers of the Cabinet substantially."

Q. "You referred to the salaries as defining grades, and you said that offices carrying a higher salary than others really create a difference in grade between the two sets of offices?"

A. "In the public estimation it does, and in the estimation of politicians."

Q. "And also in the estimation of the men themselves who are in them?"

A. "I think undoubtedly it does."

Q. "Is it not bad that there should be any

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

inducement by way of promotion for a man, if he has the opportunity to leave a job that he has just got a full grip of, to get a job merely because it is promotion to another office in the Cabinet with which he is not familiar, and which he is not so capable of handling ? ”

A. “ Of course, a Prime Minister acts wrongly if he allows such a thing to take place. I have known cases in my own experience when I have offered a higher and better-paid office to a capable man, and he has refused it on the ground that he thought he was more fitted for the office he was at present discharging. There is a very much higher spirit of public duty among politicians than the world at large believes.”

Q. “ The difference between £2,000 and £5,000 a year is not the deciding factor ? ”

A. “ It is a very considerable one, I agree, but I put it much more upon the ground that people who are considered to be qualified to sit in what I call the Inner Council, and to take the real responsibility of government—for it rests practically with them alone—ought to be upon the same footing.<sup>1</sup>

“ There is still, as I have often found at election times, a widespread belief that men who have held high office when they become ex-Ministers receive pensions from the State. This is not true. No ex-Minister is entitled to a pension, except past Lord Chancellors, who receive £5,000 a year, and whose case, as I pointed out to the Committee, is exceptional. The Lord Chancellor’s pension is now regarded, and,

<sup>1</sup> In the United States the salary of a Cabinet Minister is not more than 12,000 dollars. On the other hand, both in the United States and France members of the Legislature are paid on a higher scale than is the case here. The figures are : Great Britain, £400 ; United States, 7,500 dollars ; France, 27,000 francs.

## OFFICES AND PENSIONS

I think, properly regarded, as imposing an honourable obligation on the pensioner to sit and continue to do judicial business. They do sit, as a matter of fact, and the country gets very great advantage from it. I do not know how many there are now, but I have known three or four ex-Lord Chancellors sitting in the House of Lords and on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and well earning the £5,000 a year they receive as pensions. I am sure that they think it an honourable obligation to do so.”<sup>1</sup>

The only conditions upon which Political Pensions can lawfully be given are stated in a Memorandum by the Treasury, which is set out in Appendix VI to the Report of the Committee. Of the First Class Pensions of £2,000 a year there are only four, the qualification for which is a minimum service of four years in an office with a salary of not less than £5,000. The applicant must sign a statement that his total income is inadequate to maintain his station in life.

The same declaration is required of applicants for the two lower classes of Pensions (£1,200 and £800 a year), which are also limited to four in each class.

During the many years that I was First Lord of the Treasury I never gave away any of these Pensions, nor (I believe) has any of my successors. There are now no Political Pensions being paid.

<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 10.

## CHAPTER VII

### PATRONAGE (I)

“ALL Patronage of all descriptions,” wrote Sir Robert Peel in 1843, “so far from being of the least advantage personally to a Minister, involves him in nothing but embarrassment.” Of the many classes of Patronage which come within the province of the Prime Minister, the grant of honours for political and public services is the most irksome and the most thankless. I suspect that there are few holders of the office (since the days of the Duke of Newcastle and Lord North) who would not have been heartily glad to be relieved of it.

The Prime Minister, however (as First Lord of the Treasury), has a more grateful task—for which, as will be seen, he is inadequately and even miserably equipped—in supplying the urgent necessities of literary and scientific men, and others who have rendered service to the State, and their dependents. This is a duty which was much neglected in the eighteenth century, though it is to be remembered to the credit of one of the worst Prime Ministers of that era—Lord Bute—that he granted Dr. Johnson a pension of £300 a year. When, in the last year of the Doctor’s life, his friends solicited an addition to it, in order that he might be able to pass the winter in the milder climate of Italy, the request, although pressed by Lord Thurlow, was refused. Whether Pitt, who was then Prime Minister, was personally responsible for this ungracious act (as Macaulay assumes in one of his most biting asides)

## PATRONAGE

is not proved,<sup>1</sup> but it is certain that a Minister who could make Pye Poet Laureate was singularly callous to the claims of literary distinction.

Sir Robert Peel's practice was very different. In his short Administration, in the early months of 1835, he offered out of the scanty means at his disposal assistance to Wordsworth, Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Somerville, James Hogg and Southey.<sup>2</sup>

Before his second term of office (1841-46) Parliament had provided, at the accession of Queen Victoria, by the Civil List Act of 1837, that it should be lawful for the Treasury to charge upon the Consolidated Fund "such sums as may be required to defray the charge of Civil List Pensions at the rate of £1,200 a year for each year of the reign." That remains to this day the governing provision; and no wonder that Sir Robert Peel, when he came to the task of administering it, should have written: "It would have been better if Parliament had given nothing to the Crown than such a pittance for the recognition of such services."<sup>3</sup> Peel set a good example to his successors by granting pensions out of the fund to Wordsworth, Tennyson and Faraday.

When, sixty years later, I became First Lord of the Treasury, I felt, as I know my predecessors did, the meagreness, and often the futility, of the aid that could be given to any, and the harsh necessity of refusing anything to not a few, of those who, pursuing, often with the most brilliant gifts, unremunerative callings of the highest value to the nation, were left in pecuniary straits.

I had reason to suppose that some assistance of the kind might not be unwelcome to an eminent poet,

<sup>1</sup> See G. B. Hill's edition of "Boswell," IV, p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> Parker's "Peel," II, pp. 304-11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, III, p. 436.



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Mr. Swinburne, and I wrote to him in that sense. I have preserved his reply, which was as follows :—

THE PINES,  
11, Putney Hill, S.W.  
*July 16, 1908.*

MY DEAR MR. ASQUITH,

I will not take up a minute more of your time than I can help by entering into explanations as to what unavoidable circumstances have delayed by too many days my reply to your letter of the ninth. I trust you will have already assumed them to be unavoidable, and will accept my very sincere apology and expression of regret.

You must not think me insensible to the cordial courtesy of your letter if I decline the offer of a pension. But the remembrance of Jowett, a friend to whom I owe a debt of regard which, after his death, I did what I could to repay, gives me pleasure in offering to another old Balliol man my own equally cordial acknowledgment of his courtesy.

Believe me to be,  
Very faithfully yours,  
(Sgd.) A. C. SWINBURNE.

Besides the Civil List Pensions, there is another sum charged on the Civil List (Class V) for "Royal Bounty, Alms, and Special Services," which is fixed at £13,200 a year. Of this total, £1,200 is called the Royal Charity Fund, and is administered by the "Lady of the First Lord of the Treasury." It is a survival from the reign of George II, when its beneficiaries were described as "Female Objects in Distress." It is given, as a rule, in small pensions, and not infrequently the amount supposed to be available in any particular year is absorbed by provision for pensions

## PATRONAGE

already awarded. Of the balance, £3,000 goes to the Lord High Almoner and the Privy Purse, and the First Lord is left with £9,000, with any addition there may be from invested savings, at his own disposal. It affords him the opportunity of granting lump sums—always of very moderate dimensions—to help cases of immediate urgency. There are in the letters of Sir R. Peel two moving instances in which he showed his habitual delicacy and consideration. The one is his grant to the great humorist Tom Hood and his family, in his last illness; the second, to the artist Haydon, which reached him within a few hours of his tragic end.<sup>1</sup>

The doling out of these meagre funds is a heart-rending task to the Minister, and, since there is no possible temptation to malversation or abuse, the rigid limitation of their amount is not creditable to Parliament or advantageous to the nation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the letters in Parker's "Peel," III, pp. 442-9.

<sup>2</sup> I have been much indebted in this Chapter for information supplied to me by my friend and old Private Secretary, Mr. R. S. Meiklejohn, C.B., of the Treasury.

■

CHAPTER VIII  
PATRONAGE (II)

ECCLESIASTICAL

THE Ecclesiastical Patronage of the Prime Minister falls to him either as such, or as First Lord of the Treasury.

As I held the two offices—which are not always combined ; for some years in our own time they were dissociated, when Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister, and Mr. Balfour First Lord of the Treasury—during the best part of nine continuous years, I had an unusually varied experience. Apart from the appointment to parochial cures, which is divided with the Lord Chancellor, the holder of the offices which I held has, with a few exceptions, at his disposal—subject to the ultimate approval of the King—all the most responsible positions in the Church.

I have not the materials for an exact computation, but on the Episcopal Bench my recommendations must from first to last have covered something like thirteen or fourteen Sees, including one of the Archbishoprics. I had also to fill some of the most important Deaneries—St. Paul's, Westminster, Durham ; and Canonries in almost all the old Chapters.

This has always been an anxious and sometimes a troublesome function. George III, who took a strong personal interest in Episcopal appointments, succeeded twice in elevating his own nominee to the Primacy. The first time was in 1783, when, in the six

## *PATRONAGE : ECCLESIASTICAL*

weeks' Ministerial interregnum before the Coalition Government, he appointed Archbishop Moore—the last of the successors of Augustine to whom the epithets Toady and Jobber can be unequivocally applied.

Mr. Pitt, who succeeded the Coalition, and was Prime Minister continuously for the best part of eighteen years, and afterwards for another two, had during his first term the complete confidence of the King, and claimed and exercised a free hand. On his return to office in 1804, he was resolved that, when the See of Canterbury next became vacant, it should be filled by Bishop Tomline of Lincoln, his old tutor and lifelong confidant and friend. But, as events turned out, his design was baffled by the King, who, knowing Mr. Pitt's intentions, and getting early news of Archbishop Moore's death, went behind his back and gave the post on the spot to a Court favourite, Manners Sutton, much to the outwitted Minister's indignation. "Lord Sidmouth told Dean Milman that he believed such strong language had rarely, if ever, passed between a Sovereign and his Minister."<sup>1</sup>

This is a situation which, so far as I know, has not recurred, but Queen Victoria could, and did on occasion, intervene when her Minister proposed an unwelcome nominee. In 1868 Mr. Disraeli, near the end of his first Administration, when he had not yet secured the favour and personal confidence of the Queen, came into serious collision with her. In the autumn of that year the Primacy became vacant by the death of Archbishop Longley. There were two members of the Bench who were clearly marked out from their fellows as possible successors; the brilliant and gifted Wilberforce of Oxford, and the

<sup>1</sup> See Rowden, "The Primates of the Four Georges," pp. 385-6.

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broadminded and sagacious Tait of London. If the Archbishop had lived a few weeks longer, there can be little doubt that Mr. Gladstone, who by then had become Chief Minister, would have recommended Wilberforce. Mr. Disraeli proposed the name of Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester, a learned Greek Testament scholar, and a distinguished Alpinist, but with no other claim to promotion except one, which he shared with the ruck of his colleagues—"Moderate" views. The Queen interposed an absolute veto, and forced upon her Minister against his will the appointment of Bishop Tait. The See of London, which was thereby vacated, ought without doubt to have fallen to Wilberforce; Tait seems to have gone so far as to say that he would not have accepted Canterbury unless he had thought that Wilberforce would succeed him in London. But a General Election was in progress, in which the main issue was Irish Disestablishment; Disraeli had hoisted, among other emblems, the flag of "No Popery"; the Bishop was the leading figure in the High Church party; some of his near relatives had joined the Church of Rome; and the Prime Minister, who this time succeeded in getting his way, brushed Wilberforce aside in favour of a worthy man of unblemished mediocrity and neutral opinions.<sup>1</sup>

The two Kings whom I had the honour to serve were uniformly gracious and considerate, and I cannot recall any occasion on which my recommendations in the ecclesiastical sphere were not readily approved. On the whole, too, though I had my fair share of criticism from what is called the "Religious Press,"

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Jackson of Lincoln. He was the author of Sermons on "The Sinfulness of Little Sins." He could, however, on occasions, show decision and common sense. See his letter on Vestments in "Letters of Queen Victoria," 2nd series, II, p. 276.

## PATRONAGE : ECCLESIASTICAL

I was fortunate enough to escape any such short-lived tornadoes as those which assailed Lord John Russell when he appointed Hampden to Hereford, and Mr. Gladstone when he appointed Temple to Exeter. It is worth remembering that Temple succeeded, amid general approval, to the two most difficult places in the Church—London and Canterbury.

The constitutional usage which in effect places at the disposal of the Prime Minister of the day the highest offices in the Church, has become in these times not only anomalous but, on paper, almost indefensible. The Prime Minister need not belong to the Established Church ; during the last quarter of a century the post has been held more than once by a Presbyterian or a Baptist ; and whatever may be his precise ecclesiastical colour, or want of colour, in the enormous and ever-increasing pressure of his secular duties he may find little time for, or interest in, the task of selecting Bishops and Deans. It is true that he can seek skilled assistance from outside ; he could always in my time rely upon the wide knowledge and sagacious judgment of the Archbishop of Canterbury ; but the ultimate responsibility lies with himself.<sup>1</sup> I was exceptionally lucky in those whom I chose to advise me, and I can honestly say that I took the utmost trouble to find the best man, and, so far as was compatible with the needs and traditions of particular Dioceses, to hold the balance even between the different parties in the Church.

All things considered, it is surprising that the system works as well as it does. *Solvitur ambulando*. As I have said, it has no logical basis, and is only

<sup>1</sup> There is an excellent and plain-spoken letter on this matter from Lord Palmerston to Queen Victoria, who had cavilled at one of his recommendations.—(“Letters of Queen Victoria,” 2nd series, I, pp. 177-9.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

(like some others among our institutions) preserved from abuse and failure by the application of the cement of common sense and right feeling on the part of those who are called upon to work it. I have seen many suggestions for alternative methods of nomination and election, but none which, so far as I can judge, and so long as the Church continues to be Established, would be acceptable to the bulk of the English laity.

### POET LAUREATE

One of the most interesting pieces of Patronage that can fall to the lot of a Prime Minister comes to him on the rare occurrence of a vacancy in the office of Poet Laureate, which happened during my term in 1913. The post, being regarded as part of the Royal Household, used to be in the gift of the Lord Chamberlain; but for more than a hundred years the appointment has, in fact, been made by the Chief Minister of the Crown.

I took a good deal of pains to investigate the antecedents and history of the Laureateship, and it may be of interest to summarize the result of my inquiries.<sup>1</sup> The following is a list of the Laureates, omitting Ben Jonson and Sir William Davenant, to whom the name was sometimes given in the reigns of Charles I and Charles II, but whose official status was not fully recognized:

DATE	NAME	REMARKS
1669	John Dryden	Deprived at the Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Those who are curious as to the antiquities and development of the office should consult the learned and entertaining account of it by Professor Broadus, of the University of Alberta ("The Laureateship"; Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921).

## PATRONAGE : POET LAUREATE

- |      |               |   |
|------|---------------|---|
| 1689 | T. Shadwell   | <p>Dryden, anticipating the "Dunciad," places Shadwell on the throne of <i>Dulness</i> :</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">" Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,<br/>Mature in dulness from his tender years."</p> <p style="text-align: right; padding-right: 20px;">(<i>MacFlecknoe.</i>)</p> |
| 1692 | Nahum Tate    | <p>A butt of Pope and Swift. Mainly remembered for his Christmas Carol—</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">" While Shepherds watched their flocks."</p>   |
| 1715 | Nicholas Rowe | <p>A fine scholar, and successful playwright. " Seldom pierces the breast ; always delights the ear ; and often improves the understanding." (Dr. Johnson.)</p>   |
| 1718 | L. Eusden     | <p>" A parson much bemused in beer." (Pope.)</p>  |
| 1730 | Colley Cibber | <p>Popular actor and playwright. Installed by Pope on the throne of Dulness in place of Theobald. " I wrote more to be fed than to be famous," Cibber says of himself. His " Apology " is still excellent reading.</p>  |



## *FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT*

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| 1757 | W. Whitehead<br>(Gray refused)                | <p>"I would rather be ser-<br/>geant - trumpeter or pin-<br/>maker to the palace."<br/>(Gray.)</p> <p>"Dulness and Method<br/>still are one;<br/>And Whitehead is their<br/>darling son."<br/>(Churchill.)</p>  |
| 1785 | Thomas Warton                                 | Professor of Poetry at Ox-<br>ford, and author of the<br>"History of English<br>Poetry."  |
| 1790 | Henry James Pye                               | Lost his seat in Parliament,<br>and was consoled by Pitt<br>with this office, and a<br>Police Magistracy.   |
| 1813 | Robert Southey<br>(Sir W. Scott<br>refused)   | Macaulay (to Napier), April<br>26, 1841—the Whigs being<br>still in office: "It has<br>occurred to me that if<br>poor Southey dies . . .<br>Leigh Hunt might very<br>fitly have the laurel, if<br>that absurd custom is to<br>be kept up, or at all<br>events the pension and<br>the sack." (Trevelyan,<br>p. 398.) |
| 1843 | William Words-<br>worth                       |   |
| 1850 | Alfred Tennyson<br>(Samuel Rogers<br>refused) |   |

## PATRONAGE : POET LAUREATE

1892-95	Vacant
1896	Alfred Austin
1913	Robert Bridges

The official duty of the Poet Laureates from Rowe to Southey was to furnish two Odes a year—one on New Year's Day, and the other on the King's Birthday. This obligation was abolished during Southey's tenure in 1820. But Southey, with his irrepressible *scribendi cacoethes*,<sup>1</sup> poured forth a stream of verse on every public occasion, with such profuseness as to give fresh point to Byron's admonition :

“ O Southey ! Southey ! Cease thy varied song !  
A bard may chaunt too often and too long.”<sup>2</sup>

The salary was, during the eighteenth century, £100 a year together with a butt of Canary Wine every Christmas. The second item was commuted by Pye for cash ; £27 in lieu of the butt of Sack, which sum was apparently included in the £100. “ The present books of the Lord Chamberlain's department show an annual payment to the Poet Laureate of £72, and in the accounts of the Lord Steward's department is still recorded an annual payment to the Poet Laureate of £27 ‘ in lieu of a butt of Sack.’ ”<sup>3</sup>

The office, it will be observed from the above enumeration, was, after the time of Dryden, rarely filled by a poet of the first order ; and it is not surprising that in the eighteenth century, when it was held (with the exception of Rowe and Warton, and perhaps Whitehead) by a succession

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay (in a letter, Jan. 18, 1843) : “ Southey would write the History of Brazil before breakfast ; an Ode after breakfast ; then the History of the Peninsular War till dinner ; and an article for the *Quarterly Review* in the evening.”—(Trevelyan, p. 429.)

<sup>2</sup> Broadus, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> Broadus, Appendix V, p. 228.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

of wretched poetasters,<sup>1</sup> and had been refused not only by a great poet like Gray, but even by a writer of the calibre of Mason, Gibbon should have ridiculed its continuance.<sup>2</sup> It reached its nadir when Pitt gave it as a consolation prize to Pye, one of his political hacks. In the nineteenth century it was restored to respectability by Southey, and to honour and distinction by Wordsworth and Tennyson.

Tennyson died (1892) almost immediately after Mr. Gladstone had formed his fourth and last Government. I had then become for the first time a member of the Cabinet, and I had the privilege of more than one discussion with the Prime Minister as to the filling of the vacancy. Browning and Matthew Arnold—either of whom would have been fit to receive the laurel “greener from the brows” of Wordsworth and Tennyson—were both dead; Swinburne was judged to be “impossible”; and Mr. Gladstone, acting on Jowett’s advice, declined to nominate a successor.<sup>3</sup> Lord Rosebery took the same view, and it was left to Lord Salisbury to bestow the laurel on a faithful and busy political scribe, Alfred Austin. He inaugurated his term of office with the lines, already referred to, on “Jameson’s Ride.”<sup>4</sup>

When a vacancy again occurred, in 1913, I had no hesitation in offering the post to Mr. Robert Bridges, and I had the satisfaction of finding my choice commended by the most distinguished and promising of the younger poets of the day.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Broadus has been at the pains to collect some typical illustrations of their work from the official Odes of Eusden, Cibber, etc.

<sup>2</sup> See Note 8 to Chapter LXX of the “Decline and Fall.”

<sup>3</sup> See Broadus, pp. 197–202. A bitterly disappointed aspirant was Lewis Morris, author of the “Epic of Hades,” who, it appears, attributed to Jowett’s influence “the deplorable resolution which our good octogenarian, Mr. G., was persuaded to make.”

<sup>4</sup> *Anie*, vol. I, pp. 253–4.

■

*PART VII*

■



## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

IN this Chapter I have, for convenience, collected, and so far as was possible, traced to their origin, some of the principal "catchwords" which circulated in the political world during the years covered by the narrative. Several of them have been already referred to. As will be seen, the most adroit coiners of this kind of currency were, on the whole, Disraeli, Goschen, and John Morley; but among the phrases, which in their day were most in vogue, there are not a few striking examples of conscious or unconscious plagiarism.

Of such plagiarisms Disraeli, who was a conspicuous offender, gives a characteristic defence, after he had been convicted of borrowing in his funeral oration on the Duke of Wellington (November 1852) a lengthy passage from Thiers. He writes to Monckton Milnes: "Association of ideas brought it back when musing for a moment, amid the hurry and strife of affairs over a late, solemn occasion, and I summoned it from the caverns of my mind. *Unfortunately the spirit was too faithful.*"<sup>1</sup>

### IMPERIUM ET LIBERTAS

Mr. Disraeli, House of Commons, February 11, 1851, in a speech on agricultural distress, recommended a policy by which, he said, they might build up again the fortunes of the land of England: "That land to which we owe so much of our power and of our freedom; that land which has achieved the union of those

<sup>1</sup> Buckle, III, p. 394.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

two qualities for combining which a Roman Emperor was deified, *Imperium et Libertas*."

At the Guildhall, November 10, 1879, he repeated the phrase: "One of the greatest of Romans, when asked what were his politics, replied: '*Imperium et Libertas*.' That would not make a bad programme for a British Ministry. It is one from which Her Majesty's advisers do not shrink."

Mr. Buckle<sup>1</sup> points out that his "most famous collocation of Latin words" was a misquotation, into which he was betrayed by the authority of Bolingbroke and Bacon. The actual words of Tacitus in the "*Agricola*," sec. 3, are: "*Quamquam. . . . Nerva Cæsar res olim dissociabiles miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem.*"

### CONSPICUOUS BY ABSENCE

It is generally believed that Lord John Russell used this phrase with regard to another statesman. It is to be found in his address to the electors of the City of London, April, 1859: "Her Majesty's Ministers, early in the session, introduced a so-called Reform Bill. Among the defects of the Bill, which were numerous, one provision was *conspicuous by its presence and another by its absence*." Subsequently, alluding to it, he said: "It is not an original expression of mine, but is taken from one of the greatest historians of antiquity."

Mr. Herbert Paul, in an essay on the Decay of Classical Quotation,<sup>2</sup> remarks that the question whether this was a "bull" was "discussed for a long time before it was discovered by the maintainers of the affirmative that they were criticizing Tacitus and not Lord John."

The reference is to the funeral of Junia, widow of

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Disraeli," V, p. 515.

<sup>2</sup> "Men and Letters."

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

Cassius, and sister of Brutus:<sup>1</sup> "Viginti clarissimarum familiarum imagines antelatae sunt. . . . Præfulgebant Cassius atque Brutus eo ipso, quod effigies eorum non visebantur."

### BLOATED ARMAMENTS

"Disraeli used (Mr. Buckle observes) in a debate on May 8, 1862, on expenditure and policy, a phrase which stuck. Instead of acting in cordial alliance with France, he said we had been trying to govern by a new system of what was called moral power, which meant '*bloated armaments*' in time of peace, and produced misconceptions, broils and distrust, while taxation had found its limit and was sapping the strength of England. The phrase itself at once produced misconception."<sup>2</sup>

### REST AND BE THANKFUL

Lord John Russell, at a dinner at Blairgowrie, September, 1863: "With regard to domestic policy, I think we are all very much agreed, because the feeling of the country and of those who have conducted great reforms, is very much like that of the man who, having made a road in your own Highlands, put a stone on the top of the mountain with the inscription: '*Rest and be Thankful.*'"

"Strange indeed," writes Spencer Walpole, "is the fate of epigrams. Almost every well-informed person has laughed at the author of the Reform Act advising the country to rest and be thankful."<sup>3</sup>

"Doubling and doubling with laborious walk,  
Who, that has gained at length the wished-for  
height,  
This brief, this simple wayside call can slight,  
And rests not thankful?"—WORDSWORTH.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. Ann. III, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Disraeli," IV, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup> "Life of Lord John Russell," Walpole, II, p. 402.



## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

### MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS

Mr. Bright, Birmingham, January 18, 1865: "We may be proud of this, that England is the ancient country of Parliaments. We have had here, with scarcely an intermission, Parliaments meeting constantly for six hundred years; and doubtless there was something of a Parliament even before the Conquest. England is the *Mother of Parliaments*."

The phrase had already become proverbial before it was used by Mr. Bright. It is a vulgar error to speak of the English *Parliament* as the "Mother of Parliaments."

### UNMUZZLED

Mr. Gladstone, Free Trade Hall, Manchester, offering himself as candidate for South Lancashire, after defeat at Oxford, July, 1865: "At last, my friends, I am come among you, and I am come—to use an expression which has become very famous and is not likely to be forgotten—I am come among you *unmuzzled*."

"He is a dangerous man," Palmerston had said; "keep him in Oxford and he is partially muzzled; but send him elsewhere and he will run wild."<sup>1</sup>

### THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

#### AND

### THE SCOTCH TERRIER

Mr. Bright, March 13, 1866, referring to the Liberal opponents of the Reform Bill, said: "The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Horsman) is the first of the new Party who has entered into what may be called his political *Cave of Adullam*, and he has called about him everyone

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Lord Shaftesbury," II, pp. 171, 188.

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

that was in distress and everyone that was discontented.”<sup>1</sup>

It was in the same speech that Mr. Bright, observing that Mr. Horsman had “succeeded in hooking” Mr. Lowe, compared this party of two to “a Scotch terrier that was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail.”

Two Members of Parliament, it was said, in a story recalled by Mr. Alfred Dale (in *The Times Literary Supplement* of June 5, 1913), were walking home from the House after the debate, and one asked the other: “Now, where did Bright get that ‘Cave’ from?” “My dear fellow,” his companion replied, “have you forgotten your ‘Arabian Nights’?” “Of course,” exclaimed the other, “I remember now.”

Mr. Lowe, in an address on Primary and Classical Education before the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh, November 1, 1867: “You will remember that Mr. Bright, in last session of Parliament, denominated certain gentlemen by a name derived from a cave. Well, I assure you, gentlemen, there was not one person in twenty whom I met who knew anything about the Cave of Adullam, and I was under the melancholy and cruel necessity of explaining it to them, and of pointing the arrow that was aimed against my own breast.”

Mr. Bright, writing in 1875, to his wife, about a visit to Earl Russell, said: “I told him the Palestine explorers have discovered the Cave of Adullam, which amused him very much.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel xxii. 1-2. “David . . . escaped to the cave Adullam. . . . And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him.”

Mr. Trevelyan, in “Life of Bright” (p. 356) notes that the French historian, M. Seignobos, has thus explained to his fellow-countrymen the strange political term coined by Bright: “*Allusion à un passage de la Bible. Adullam avait voulu tuer David.*”

<sup>2</sup> “Life of John Bright,” G. M. Trevelyan, p. 358.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

Bishop Wilberforce, under date March 26, 1868, mentions Gladstone's new Commandment: "Thou shalt not commit Adullamy."<sup>1</sup>

Dining at Gladstone's, May 29, 1867, the Bishop had some conversation with Bright, and referred to his comparison of Lowe and Horsman to the Scotch Terrier. Bright said: "I had prepared it for a former speech, but while I was speaking I looked at Lowe and my heart melted and I left it out; but when on the occasion you mention he attacked me, then I had no pity and I gave him the dog."<sup>2</sup>

### OUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD

In a discussion on electoral statistics, in relation to the Reform Bill of 1866, Mr. Gladstone said: "I object to the whole mode of dealing with this question of statistics. Members seem as if they were engaged in ascertaining the numbers of an invading army. But the persons to whom their remarks apply are our fellow-subjects, our fellow-Christians, *our own flesh and blood*, who have been lauded to the skies for their good conduct."<sup>3</sup> "This was instantly denounced by Lord Cranborne as 'sentimental rant,' and inquiries soon followed why kinship in flesh and blood should be limited by a £7 rental."<sup>4</sup>

Probably it was to this utterance that Mr. Lowe was alluding when, in one of his anti-Reform speeches, he scoffed at the "maudlin enthusiasm of humanity."

### A LEAP IN THE DARK

Usually attributed to Lord Derby, who said in the House of Lords on the final stage of the Reform Bill of 1867 (August 6th): "No doubt we are making a great experiment and taking *a leap in the dark*."

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Samuel Wilberforce," by R. Wilberforce, p. 324.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, March 23, 1866.

<sup>4</sup> Morley, II, p. 203.

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

Mr. Justin McCarthy in his "History of Our Own Times," says the phrase had been previously used in the House of Commons by Lord Cranborne (afterwards Marquis of Salisbury). Lord Cranborne wrote in an article in the *Quarterly Review*, October, 1867: "We quite agree with Lord Derby in his estimate of his own measure. It is a leap completely in the dark."

The phrase is traced to Thomas Hobbes, who is reported to have said with reference to his approaching death, that he was about to take his last voyage—a great leap in the dark.<sup>1</sup>

Heartfree, in Vanbrugh's "Provoked Wife," produced twenty years after Hobbes's death, uses the phrase in accepting a challenge to matrimony: "So, now I am in for Hob's voyage; a great leap in the dark."

### TO EDUCATE THE PARTY

Mr. Disraeli, at a Conservative banquet in Corn Exchange, Edinburgh, October 29, 1867: "I had to prepare the mind of the country, and to educate—if it be not arrogant to use such a phrase—to *educate our Party*. It is a large Party, and requires its attention to be called to questions of this kind with some pressure. I had to prepare the mind of Parliament and the country on this question of Reform."

This was in his famous "Blue Boar and Red Lion" speech—one of the happiest of his performances.

### WAITERS UPON PROVIDENCE

Mr. Gladstone, at Newton, October 17, 1868, referred to the Conservative Ministers, in respect of the Irish Church, as *waiters upon Providence*, looking for the moment which way the cat was about to jump. The phrase had been used in "Coningsby."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Benham, "Book of Quotations," and Latham's "Famous Sayings."

<sup>2</sup> Book II, ch. 4.

Mr. Disraeli, describing political events in the autumn of 1834, when King William dismissed the Whig Government and Sir Robert Peel was summoned home from Rome, wrote: "The hundred and forty (Tories) threw a grim glance on the numerous waiters on Providence, and amiable trimmers who affectionately inquired every day when news might be expected of Sir Robert."

## LIVING IN A BALLOON

Mr. Gladstone, in discussion on the Lords' Amendments to the Irish Church Bill: "We can hardly expect of the House of Lords that they should appreciate the humble considerations which govern the special relations between each Member of Parliament and the portion of the British people that he represents. From the great eminence upon which they sit they can no more discern the minute particulars of our transactions than *a man in a balloon* can see all that is passing on the earth below."<sup>1</sup>

## SIX OMNIBUSES THROUGH TEMPLE BAR

Mr. Bright, Birmingham, January 11, 1870, dealing with reforms that the Government were expected to pass: "Bear in mind that it is *not easy to drive six omnibuses abreast through Temple Bar*, and therefore I cannot tell whether, during this Session, there will be passed or even offered to Parliament a measure of Education such as you or I, or any of us, would hope for."

Mr. G. M. Trevelyan<sup>2</sup> says he had urged in the Cabinet that the Education Bill should be postponed till 1871, on the ground that the Irish Land Bill would occupy Parliament fully during 1870.

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, July 15, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of John Bright," p. 409.

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

### SANITAS SANITATUM

Mr. Disraeli, Free Trade Hall, Manchester, April 3, 1872, promulgating Conservative programme: "A great scholar and a great wit, 300 years ago, said that, in his opinion, there was a great mistake in the Vulgate, which, as you all know, is the Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures, and that, instead of saying 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'—*Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas*—the wise and witty king really said: *Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*. Gentlemen, it is impossible to overrate the importance of the subject. After all, the first consideration of a Minister should be the health of the people."

Mr. Buckle notes<sup>1</sup> that Disraeli had given this watchword of "Sanitas" at Aylesbury, on September 21, 1864, without much notice being taken of it.

Lord Rosebery, in his volume on Lord Randolph Churchill (p. 151), says *Sanitas sanitatum* was by no means an original phrase, but had been employed some two centuries before Disraeli had uttered it; he does not say when or by whom.

### BUSY MINT OF LOGICAL COUNTERFEITS

Mr. John Morley, in "The Struggle for National Education," 1873, dealing with an argument by Mr. Gladstone: "A poorer sophism was never coined even in *that busy mint of logical counterfeits*."

### PLUNDERING AND BLUNDERING

Mr. Disraeli, in what his biographer describes as a "full-blooded letter, conceived in the hustings spirit," to Lord Grey de Wilton, Conservative candidate for Bath, October 3, 1873, on the policy of the

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Disraeli," V, p. 190.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

Liberal Ministers : " For nearly five years the present Ministers have harassed every trade, worried every profession, and assailed or menaced every class, institution, and species of property in the country. Occasionally they have varied this state of civil warfare by perpetrating some job which outraged public opinion, or by stumbling into mistakes which have been always discreditable, and sometimes ruinous. All this they call a policy, and seem quite proud of it ; but the country has, I think, made up its mind to close this career of *plundering and blundering*."

As Mr. Buckle points out, Disraeli had used the phrase "plundering and blundering" before in "Coningsby," Book 2, ch. 4.

It had been used by Bolingbroke.

### FRIENDS OF EVERY COUNTRY BUT THEIR OWN

Lord Beaconsfield, Guildhall, November, 1877, defending his policy on the Eastern Question : "Cosmopolitan critics, men who are the *friends of every country but their own*, have denounced this policy as a selfish policy. My Lord Mayor, it is as selfish as patriotism."

### PEACE WITH HONOUR

From a window in Downing Street, on his return from the Berlin Conference, July 16, 1878, Lord Beaconsfield said : "Lord Salisbury and myself have brought you back peace, but a *peace*, I hope, *with honour*, which may satisfy our Sovereign and tend to the welfare of the country."

The phrase "Peace with Honour," popularized by Disraeli, has been traced to many authors and statesmen from the time of Shakespeare and Sir Robert Cecil. It appears, for instance, in "Coriolanus," and in Wither's "Vox Pacifica."

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

It was used in Disraeli's own time by Lord John Russell. During the autumn of 1863, Lord John, at Dundee, reviewed the legislative successes of the previous thirty years and then, turning to external politics, said: "As Secretary for Foreign Affairs it has been my object to preserve peace with honour."

It was used also by M. Ollivier in the Chamber of Deputies, in 1870. When trouble arose over the proposal to make a Hohenzollern King of Spain, M. Ollivier said: "*Le Gouvernement désire la paix. Il la désire avec passion, mais avec l'honneur.*"<sup>1</sup>

### PERISH INDIA

At an anti-Turk demonstration held at St. James's Hall in December, 1876, and attended by Mr. Gladstone and Lord Shaftesbury, the most fervent of the speakers were Canon Liddon and E. A. Freeman, the historian.

Freeman said: "Perish the interest of England, perish our dominion in India, sooner than that we should strike one blow or speak one word on behalf of the wrong against the right."

Lord Beaconsfield writes (December 16, 1876) to Lady Bradford: "I have just returned from Windsor. . . . I found the Faery most indignant about the St. James's Hall Conference. . . . She thinks the Attorney-General ought to be set at these men; it can't be constitutional."<sup>2</sup>

In the condensed form, "Perish India," Freeman's phrase for a long time did service on Tory platforms as a convenient summary of Liberal foreign policy.

### BAG AND BAGGAGE

Mr. Gladstone in his pamphlet, September, 1876, on "The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the

<sup>1</sup> "The Second Empire," by Philip Guedalla.

<sup>2</sup> Buckle, VI, p. 107.



## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

East": "Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbashis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, *bag and baggage*, shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned."

The phrase, "bag and baggage," was already familiar in literature.

Touchstone: Come, shepherd, let us make an honourable retreat! though not with bag and baggage, yet with scrip and scrippage.<sup>1</sup>

The Lord Incredulity to the four noble Captains before the town of Mansoul: "Arise with bag and baggage, and begone."<sup>2</sup>

Daniel Doyce was "ready for starting, bag and baggage."<sup>3</sup>

Professor Pesca, in "The Woman in White": "Send him off, bag and baggage (English phrase again—ha!); send him off, bag and baggage, by the train to-morrow."

### THE UNSPEAKABLE TURK

Mr. Carlyle, in letter to Mr. George Howard, on the Eastern Question, November 24, 1876: "*The unspeakable Turk* should be immediately struck out of the question and the country left to honest European guidance; delaying which can be profitable or agreeable only to gamblers on the Stock Exchange, but distressing and unprofitable to all other men."

"That unspeakable Turk," King Machabol, in Carlyle's Essay on the Nibelungenlied, 1831.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "As You Like It," act iii, sc. 2.

<sup>2</sup> "The Holy War," Bunyan.

<sup>3</sup> "Little Dorrit," Book II, ch. 22.

<sup>4</sup> "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays."

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

THE GREATEST OF BRITISH INTERESTS IS PEACE

The fifteenth Earl of Derby, then Foreign Secretary, speaking after the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War, at Merchant Taylors', on June 11, 1877, said : " I agree with everything that has been said by Lord Salisbury that we must be ready to defend our interests when those interests are attacked . . . (but) after all we must remember this, that *the greatest of all British interests is the interest of Peace.*"

### LARGE MAPS

Lord Salisbury, in the House of Lords, June 11, 1877, replying to Lord De Mauley, who gave an alarming description of the progress of Russia in Central Asia, said : " In descriptions of this kind a great deal of misapprehension arises from the popular use of maps on a small scale. As with such maps you are able to put a thumb on India and a finger on Russia, some persons at once think that the political situation is alarming, and that India must be looked to. If the noble lord would *use a larger map*—say one on the scale of the ordnance map of England—he would find that the distance between Russia and British India is not to be measured by the finger and thumb, but by a rule."

### MEN OF LIGHT AND LEADING

Lord Beaconsfield, in his letter to the Duke of Marlborough (election manifesto), March 8, 1880 :<sup>1</sup> " A portion of its (Ireland's) population is attempting to sever the constitutional tie which unites it to Great Britain in that bond which has favoured the power and prosperity of both. It is to be hoped that all *men of light and leading* will resist this destructive doctrine."

<sup>1</sup> A masterpiece of slipshod English.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

He had already used the same phrase in "Sybil," Book V, Ch. I, describing the interest occasioned in the House of Commons by the endangered Constitution of Jamaica: "Not a public man of light and leading in the country withheld the expression of his opinion."

He had been anticipated by Burke in "Reflections on the Revolution in France": "The men of England—the men, I mean, of light and leading in England."

### GREATER FREEDOM AND LESS RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Gladstone, on coming into power in 1880, wrote to Count Karolyi, expressing regret for words of "a painful and wounding character" with regard to Austrian foreign policy which he had used in the electoral campaign when "in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility."

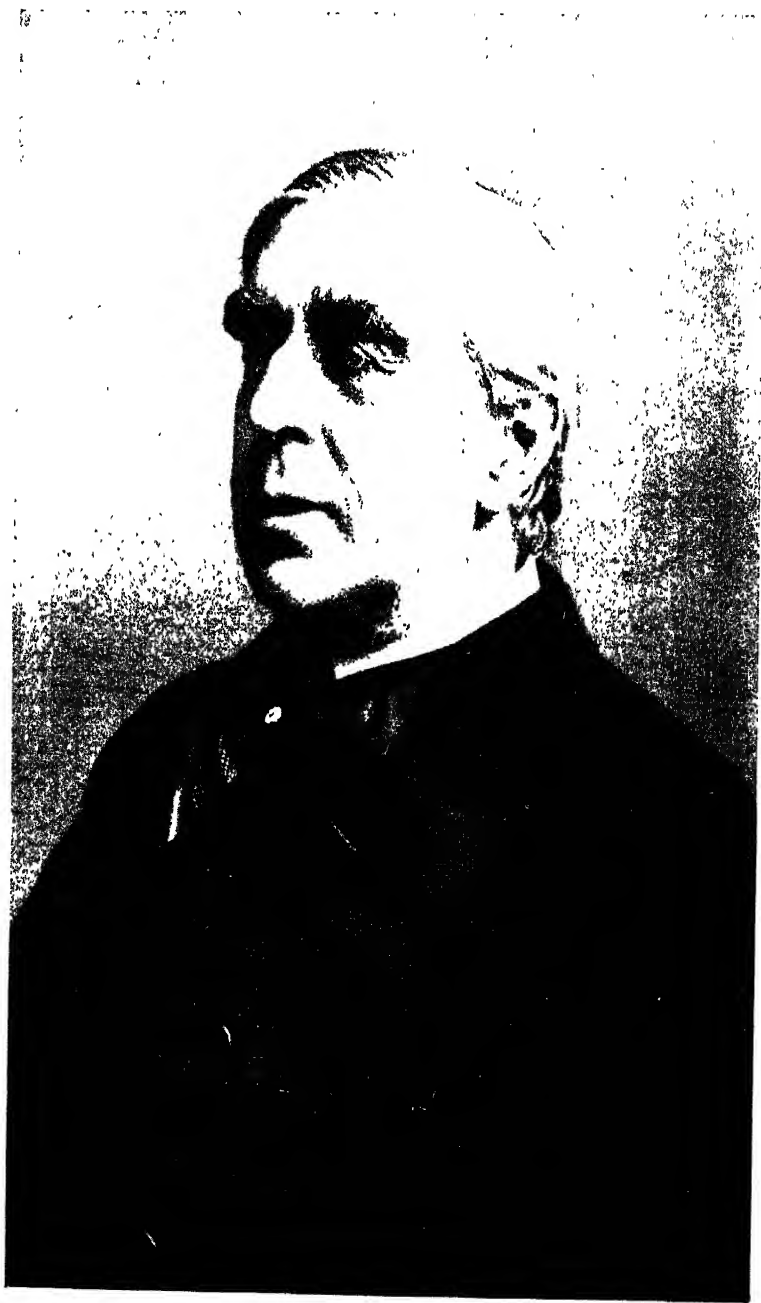
### PRAIRIE VALUE

Mr. Bright on Irish Land Bill, May 9, 1881: "To the complaint that the Bill gives so much to the tenants and takes it all from the landlords, I should make this answer: If all that the tenants have done were swept off the soil and all that the landlords have done were left upon it, then, over nine-tenths of Ireland the land would be as bare of houses, of barns, of fences, and of cultivation, as it was in prehistoric times; it would be as bare as an *American prairie* where the Indian now roams, and where the foot of the white man has never trod."

### THE GRAND OLD MAN

The origin of the phrase as applied to Mr. Gladstone is difficult to trace.

Credit for it has been given to Lord Rosebery and Mr. Bradlaugh.



*Photo: Russell*



## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

What is certain is that Sir S. Northcote applied it to Mr. Gladstone at Liverpool, April 12, 1882 : " Argue as you please, you are nowhere, because you are told *that grand old man*, the Prime Minister, insists upon the other thing being done."

Sir William Harcourt, Derby, April 25, 1882, said : " Sir S. Northcote cannot understand what we see in what he is pleased to call ' *that grand old man*.' We understand it, for he *is* a grand old man."

### A BLANK CHEQUE

Mr. Goschen, House of Commons, debate on Conservative Vote of Censure on Liberal Government for its Sudan policy, February 19, 1884 : " I am asked to have the courage of my opinions and vote to-night against Her Majesty's Government, because I do not agree with them on some points. I have the courage of my opinions, but I have not the temerity to give a *political blank cheque* to Lord Salisbury."

Goschen, in his diary, wrote that the phrase, " a political blank cheque " was taken up by every newspaper, and everybody congratulated him on it.<sup>1</sup>

The phrase had, however, been already used by Mr. W. H. Smith. In debate, February, 1878, on the Vote of Credit of six millions for anti-Russian policy, Smith said : " Mr. Gladstone is willing to give the great support of his name in favour of the expression of our views in the Congress, but he thinks it right to say that he refuses, on the grounds of precedent and financial policy, to give the six millions. It appears that the right hon. gentleman refuses to give the Government a cheque for six millions, but he will give us a *blank cheque*, without money expressed, to be filled up by ourselves at the right time."

<sup>1</sup> " Life of Lord Goschen " : Elliot, I, p. 279.

## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

### END OR MEND

Mr. Morley, Liberal Conference, St. James's Hall, July 30, 1884, dealing with the action of the Peers in holding up the Franchise Bill: "Be sure that no power on earth can separate henceforth the question of mending the House of Commons from the other question of *mending or ending* the House of Lords."

He subsequently referred to the phrase as a "jingle of mine," but it has a long and distinguished history, as is shown by a letter from Mr. W. B. Kingsford in the *Westminster Gazette* of December 27, 1906.

Erasmus, 1518 (as translated by Froude, who explains that the references in his book are to the edition of the works of Erasmus brought out at Leyden in 1702): "That frigid quarrelsome old lady, Theology . . . . I would rather have her *ended than mended*."

Erasmus, 1521: "I would sooner have Luther mended than ended."<sup>1</sup>

Butler's "Hudibras": Part II. Canto. I:

"His only solace was, that now  
His dog-bolt fortune was so low,  
That either it must quickly end  
Or turn about again, and mend."

"Eikon Basilike": "I had the charity to interpret that most part of my subjects fought against my supposed errors, not my person; and intended to mend me, not to end me."

To these may be added:

Sir W. Scott, Halbert Glendinning in "The Monastery" (Ch. 19): "My fate calls me elsewhere to scenes where I shall end it or mend it."

Byron, "Don Juan" (Canto 10, 42): "This is the way physicians end us or mend us."

<sup>1</sup> Froude's "Life and Letters of Erasmus," Lect. 10 and 14.

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

### FILLING THE CUP

Mr. Chamberlain, Denbigh, October 20, 1884: "I resent the insults, the injuries and the injustice from which you have suffered so long at the hands of a privileged assembly. But *the cup is nearly full*. The career of high-handed wrong is coming to an end. The House of Lords have alienated Ireland, they have oppressed the Dissenters, and they now oppose the enfranchisement of the people."

In 1895 Mr. Chamberlain ridiculed the Liberals for "the latest electoral device" of "filling up the cup" with measures to be rejected by the House of Lords. Mr. Asquith retorted that this device was at least ten years old, and that the credit for the introduction into our political vocabulary of a most useful and picturesque simile ought to be claimed for its true and original author.<sup>1</sup>

### AULD LANG SYNE

(MR. ASQUITH to MR. CHAMBERLAIN)

From *Westminster Gazette*, by permission, February 18, 1895

Should auld orations be forgot

And never brought to min'?

Should auld orations be forgot,

And words o' lang syne?

For auld lang syne, dear Joe,

For auld lang syne,

We'll take the Cup and fill it up,

For auld lang syne.

We twa hae stumped the countryside,

And slang'd the Tories fine,

But ye've wander'd mony a weary foot

Sin auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

<sup>1</sup> See ante, Vol. I, p. 112.



## FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

We twa hae thunder'd gin the Lords  
From mornin' sun till dine ;  
But Dukes between us now hae come  
Sin auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

C. G

### MARCH OF A NATION

Mr. Parnell, Cork, January 21, 1885 : " We cannot ask for less than the restitution of Grattan's Parliament, with its important privileges and wide and far-reaching Constitution. We cannot, under the British Constitution, ask for more than the restitution of Grattan's Parliament. But no man has a right to fix the boundary of *the march of a nation* ; no man has a right to say to his country—thus far shalt thou go and no farther ; and we have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland's nationhood and we never shall."

### AN OLD PARLIAMENTARY HAND

Mr. Gladstone, pressed to state his Irish policy at the opening of the Parliament of 1886 while the Conservatives were still in office, said : " I stand here as a member of the House where there are many who have taken their seats for the first time upon these benches, and where there may be some to whom, possibly, I may avail myself of the privilege of old age and offer a recommendation. I would tell them of my own intention to keep my counsel, and reserve my own freedom, until I see the moment and the occasion when there may be a prospect of public benefit in endeavouring to make a movement forward ; and I will venture to recommend them, as *an old Parliamentary hand*, to do the same."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, January 21, 1886.

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

### THREE ACRES AND A COW

Term coined in a pamphlet by Mr. Frederic Impey, a leader in the movement for smallholdings, and applied to the propaganda conducted by Mr. Jesse Collings.

It was on an amendment embodying the policy of "Three Acres and a Cow" that Lord Salisbury's first Government was defeated, January 27, 1886.

The origin of the phrase is traced to John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*. Mill quotes from a treatise on Flemish husbandry that "when the land is cultivated entirely by the spade and no horses are kept, a cow is kept for every three acres of land." Bentham, in criticism of a Bill introduced by Pitt in 1797 (to provide for purchasing cows for poor people), points out that each cow would require for her sustenance *three acres* of land.<sup>1</sup>

### MAKE OUR WILLS

Mr. Goschen, at a meeting of Liberal Unionists and Conservatives in opposition to the Home Rule Bill, Her Majesty's Opera House, April 14, 1886 :

"There are some who seem to believe that if this Bill is passed we shall see the most brilliant transformation scene that has ever been witnessed, and there are others who, as the result of the rejection of the Bill, paint a picture in which dark and subterranean forces play a desperate part. Some people talk about our houses being set on fire. If so, Captain Shaw<sup>2</sup> will have to put them out. Others say that the dagger may again be brought into use. If so, we shall *make our wills* and do our duty."

<sup>1</sup> Latham : "Famous Sayings and their Authors."

<sup>2</sup> The then head of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

# FIFTY YEARS OF PARLIAMENT

## CLASSES AND MASSES

Mr. Gladstone, in his Manifesto to the electors of Midlothian dated Hawarden, May 1st, 1886, while the Home Rule Bill was before Parliament: "The adverse host consists of class and the dependents of class. . . . The heart and root, the beginning and ending of my trust is in the wise and generous justice of the nation."

At Liverpool, June 28, 1886, he alluded to "a very great and important fact—the fact that you are opposed throughout the country by a compact army, and that army is a combination of *the classes against the masses*. . . . Upon the one great class of subjects, the largest and most weighty of them all, where the determining considerations that ought to lead to a conclusion are truth, justice and humanity—upon these, all the world over, I will back the *masses against the classes*." <sup>1</sup>

## ULSTER WILL FIGHT; ULSTER WILL BE RIGHT

Lord R. Churchill, in a letter to a Liberal Unionist Member, May 7, 1886: "If political parties and political leaders, not only Parliamentary but local, should be so utterly lost to every feeling and dictate of honour and courage as to hand over coldly, and for the sake of purchasing a short and illusory Parliamentary tranquillity, the lives and liberties of the Loyalists of Ireland to their hereditary and most bitter foes, make no doubt on this point—Ulster will not be a consenting party; Ulster at the proper moment will resort to the supreme arbitrament of force; *Ulster will fight; Ulster will be right*." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. I, p. 137.

## POLITICAL CATCHWORDS

### TWENTY YEARS OF RESOLUTE GOVERNMENT

Lord Salisbury, at a meeting following the conference of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, St. James's Hall, May 15, 1886, urged that Parliament should enable the Government of England to govern Ireland. "Apply that recipe honestly, consistently and resolutely for twenty years, and at the end of that time you will find that Ireland will be fit to accept any gifts in the way of local government or repeal of coercion laws that you may wish to give her."

### FORGOT GOSCHEN

Mr. Churchill, in his Biography of his father, referring to the confession so often attributed to Lord Randolph, that he "forgot Goschen" when he resigned in December, 1886, says that, "However decisive, however disastrous to Lord Randolph the inclusion of Mr. Goschen in the Government at this time may have been, it was no surprise; for he had always been its advocate."<sup>1</sup>

Lady Dorothy Nevill says: "Mr. Long was in the smoking-room of the Carlton Club sitting with Lord Randolph, when the latter, who had just heard the news that Mr. Goschen had accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, exclaimed: 'All great men make mistakes. Napoleon forgot Blücher, I forgot Goschen.'"<sup>2</sup> Lady Dorothy adds that it was with Mr. Long's consent that she published the true version of a somewhat dramatic historical episode.<sup>2</sup>

Lady Jeune in "Memories of Fifty Years" says that Lord Randolph on the Sunday after his resignation lunched with her husband and herself to meet one

<sup>1</sup> "Lord Randolph Churchill," Ch. 17.

<sup>2</sup> "Leaves from the Notebooks of Lady Dorothy Nevill," p. 21.

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or two political friends, and that when she suggested Goschen as a possible successor he treated the idea with scorn, but "about six weeks later I was driving up Brook Street when I saw him coming towards me. He stopped the carriage and shook hands, and he talked a little about various things and then said, 'You were quite right; I forgot Goschen.'"

### BLAZING INDISCRETIONS

Mr. Morley, at Hull, November 25, 1887: "I am always very glad when Lord Salisbury makes a great speech. It is sure to be a speech in very terse and pointed language which it is a pleasure to read, and it is sure to contain at least one *blazing indiscretion* which it is a delight to remember."

### NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE

Said to have been first used in political controversy by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, an eminent Wesleyan.

Cecil Graham in "Lady Windermere's Fan" (Oscar Wilde, 1892):—"A man who moralizes is usually a hypocrite, and a woman who moralizes is invariably plain. There is nothing in the whole world so unbecoming to a woman as a Nonconformist conscience."

### PLOUGHING THE SAND

Mr. Asquith at Birmingham, Nov. 21, 1894, dealing with the action of the House of Lords, and referring to the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales: "We shall be sitting night after night, week after week, perhaps for a couple of months, discussing seriously and with the endeavour to arrive at a wise and statesmanlike conclusion the best way of settling this difficulty, on the removal of which

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the hearts of the vast bulk of the Welsh people are set, with the knowledge that all our time, all our labour, and all our assiduity is as certain to be thrown away as if you were to *plough the sands* of the seashore, the moment that Bill reaches the Upper Chamber."

A hackneyed metaphor common in classical literature. *Ovid*. Heroid : V, 115.

" Quid arenæ semina mandas ?  
Non profecturis litora bubus aras."

*Juvenal* VII, 48.

" tenuique in pulvere sulcos  
Ducimus, et litus sterili versamus aratro."

" Still we persist, plough the light sand and sow  
Seed after seed, where none can ever grow."

Gifford's Translation.

Gifford's lines are among the last entries in Joseph Chamberlain's commonplace book.<sup>1</sup>

## SPLENDID ISOLATION

This phrase, frequently attributed to Lord Goschen, is of Canadian origin.

Mr. G. E. Foster, Canadian House of Commons, January 16, 1896: " . . . In these somewhat troublesome days when the great Mother Empire stands *splendidly isolated* in Europe." <sup>2</sup>

Mr. Chamberlain, at Queenslanders' banquet, January 21, 1896: " Three weeks ago, in the words of Mr. Foster, the leader of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, the great Mother Empire stood *splendidly isolated*."

Mr. Goschen, Lewes, February 26, 1896: " A system

<sup>1</sup> Sir Austen Chamberlain, in *Sunday Times*, March 2, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> *Times* report.

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of international bartering has taken the place of the system of balance of power. We are not good at the game. We have been asked to play it, but we do not like the game, and so we have stood alone in that which is called isolation—our ‘splendid isolation,’ as one of our Colonial friends was good enough to call it.”

### MONEY ON THE WRONG HORSE

Lord Salisbury, in House of Lords, January 19, 1897, said the parting of the ways (as between Russia and Turkey) took place in 1853 when the proposals of the Emperor Nicholas were rejected by Lord Clarendon. “Many members of this House will keenly feel the nature of the mistake when I say that we put *all our money upon the wrong horse.*”

### INTELLIGENT ANTICIPATION

Mr. (afterwards Lord) Curzon, House of Commons, March 29, 1898, being asked how *The Times* correspondent at Peking had been able on several occasions to publish facts of the utmost public importance several days before the Foreign Office had information with reference to them, said: “It is the business of Her Majesty’s representatives abroad to report to us facts of which they have official cognisance, and to obtain confirmation of them before they telegraph. I hesitate to say what the functions of the modern journalist may be, but I imagine that I do not exclude *the intelligent anticipation of facts even before they occur.*”

### DARK HORSE IN A LOOSE BOX

Mr. Morley (Forest of Dean, May 25, 1899): “I have had various requests that I should explain a speech that was made by Lord Rosebery some days ago, and one correspondent even desires that I should

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subject my noble friend's speech to a scathing analysis. . . . *A dark horse in a loose box* is the last animal that I should like to subject to a scathing analysis."

### THE LONELY FURROW

Lord Rosebery (City of London Liberal Club, July 19, 1901): "I left the Liberal Party because I found it impossible to lead it, in the main owing to the divisions to which I have referred. The Liberal Party in that respect is no better now, but rather worse; and it would indeed be an extraordinary evolution of mind if, after having left the Liberal Party on that ground, I were to announce my intention of voluntarily returning to it in its present condition.

"No, gentlemen, so far as I am concerned, for the present at any rate I must proceed alone. *I must plough my furrow alone.*"

### THE CLEAN SLATE

Lord Rosebery at Liberal meeting at Chesterfield, Dec. 16, 1901: "What is the advice I have to offer you? The first is this—that you have to *clean your slate*. It is six years now since you were in office. It is sixteen years since you were in anything like power. And it does seem to me that under these circumstances the primary duty of the Liberal Party is to wipe its slate clean and consider very carefully what it is going to write on it in future."

The phrase was used by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain at Holloway, June 17, 1885, when he taunted the Tory leaders with swallowing their contradictory professions "in order that they may have a clean slate and go in search of a new policy for a united Conservative Party."



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### A GAMBLE WITH THE FOOD OF THE PEOPLE

Lord Goschen, House of Lords, June 15, 1903, denouncing Mr. Chamberlain's fiscal scheme, and referring to the boons promised to be paid out of the tax on food :

"My lords, I call that a gamble. It is *a gamble with the food of the people* ; and I trust that the noble Duke—the Duke of Devonshire—will tell us that in that gamble he will not take a hand."

### THE WHOLE HOG

Lord Goschen, Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, November 6, 1903, discussing Tariff Reform :

"If there are any extraordinary circumstances which require heroic (retaliatory) legislation I should not be adverse to it, but . . . we are not prepared to go *the whole hog*."

The old ostler in "The Romany Rye," who had served at a Hounslow inn : "When a person had once made up his mind to become a highwayman, his best policy was to go the whole hog."

Benham, in "Book of Quotations," recalls that a correspondent of "Notes and Queries" (September 27, 1851) ascribes an Irish origin to the expression, stating that in Ireland a shilling was called a hog.

### A RAGING, TEARING PROPAGANDA

Mr. Arthur Chamberlain said "Inquiry" with reference to his brother's fiscal proposals was only waiting until they were ready to have *a raging, tearing propaganda*. (Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, July 22, 1903.)

### DAMN THE CONSEQUENCES

Lord Milner, Glasgow, November 26, 1909, on the Budget : "I respect profoundly the opinions of states-

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men, much my superiors in experience and authority, who advised the House of Lords, while condemning the proposals of the Government, nevertheless to let them pass, perhaps with a protest, on the ground that these proposals are so mischievous, that the country will suffer so much under them, that there will be a tremendous reaction in favour of the Unionist Party. I respect that opinion, but I cannot follow it. If we believe a thing to be bad, and if we have a right to prevent it, it is our duty to try to prevent it, and to *damn the consequences*."

### WAIT AND SEE

Asked in the House of Commons, April 4, 1910, as to the probability of changes in the re-introduced Budget of 1909 on the matter of Irish finance, Mr. Asquith replied: "I am afraid that we must *wait and see*."

On the same day, when asked by what procedure the Constitutional resolutions would be introduced into the House of Lords, he said: "The honourable member must *wait and see*."

It is curious that a common colloquialism such as this, casually used to discourage premature curiosity, should have passed for a time into the slang of politics, and even been caricatured into a maxim of policy. As Horace says, *habent sua fata libelli*; and the same is true of *obiter dicta*.

The phrase appears to have been employed in the reverse sense in the House of Commons in May, 1837, by Lord John Russell, who said that Ministers would "wait and see" the intention of their opponents.

In 1885 (December 27) Mr. Chamberlain wrote to Mr. Labouchere regarding Irish political affairs: "I believe the true policy for everyone except Mr. Gladstone is to 'wait and see.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Henry Labouchere": Algar Thorold, p. 273.

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But its pedigree can be traced to a more illustrious source. Among the hitherto unpublished documents from the Bowood Papers, which Lord Kerry has collected and annotated in a most interesting volume, "The First Napoleon," there is to be found a record of a conversation at Elba between the exiled Emperor and two English Members of Parliament—Messrs. Vernon and Fazakerley (pp. 80-104). In the course of the talk, Napoleon is reported to have said :

"It is unfortunate for Europe that your Government is not a stronger one. If you had had a man like Lord Chatham at the head of affairs, he would have realized that it was a mistake to humiliate France too far. You had already humiliated her enough by saddling her with the Bourbons. . . . You will see there will arise one of these days in the heart of the country a Libyan wind (Simoom) which will upset everything. For my own part, I am no longer concerned. My day is done—but *Wait and See.*"

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